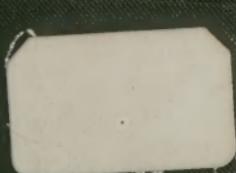


HOW TO ANSWER OBJECTIONS TO Revealed RELIGION



1.28.22.

LIBRARY OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PRINCETON, N. J.

PRESENTED BY

Mrs. William Swan.

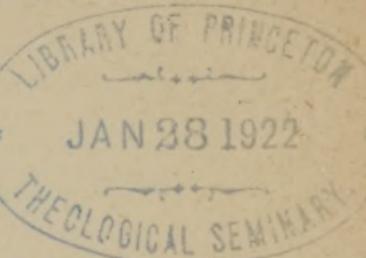
BT 1101 .W4 1880

Whately, E. J. 1822-1893.

How to answer objections to
revealed religion ..

HOW TO ANSWER OBJECTIONS
REVEALED RELIGION.

TO



BY MISS E. J. WHATELY,

WITH A PREFATORY NOTE

BY REV. JOHN HALL, D. D.

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
150 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK.

PREFATORY NOTE

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THERE is some advantage in living near a person of great powers wisely directed. One cannot but know in a measure "what manner of man" he is ; even though contact be but occasional, it gives an idea more vivid and definite than is conveyed by any description.

It was one of the felicities of my life in Dublin that it gave me the means of appreciating Archbishop Whately—a man in many respects of commanding ability, as well as of great moral and Christian worth. Without the fervor of feeling and the graces of manner which have often secured a transient popularity, he was accustomed to rely upon calm and unimpassioned appeals to judgment and conscience. One result is that his influence survives him, and it never can be with his public utter-

ances as with many of which we say, they need the magnetism and personal charm of the man himself to gain for them a hearing.

It was natural for the author of a standard work on Logic, being also a clergyman, to give much attention to the Evidences of Christianity. Both formally and indirectly the archbishop made large contributions to this department of sacred literature.

That his daughter should have inherited his literary tastes and profited by his teaching is only what might have been expected. The little book which we are gratified to find the AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY preparing to issue here, while the work of a lady, we may be assured contains nothing which her distinguished father would have disapproved, and yet may, as the work of a lady, come nearer to the mental plane of a large class that need instruction than any book of the archbishop's.

The objections stated and answered are common, in some instances plausible, and by many no doubt sincerely urged. The answers are calm, dispassionate, free from any irritating matter, and—which is no mean recommendation—concise and

intelligible. A useful and not too full "Appendix" of authorities is added in regard to points concerning which the reader may be supposed to look for the support of influential names.

Miss Whately's book is so constructed that one may heartily commend it without feeling it necessary to indicate where he might, if writing on the subject, have taken a different line. She does not give most of her answers as necessarily *the rejoinder*, still less as the *only* answer. She proceeds on the just principle that in the nature of the case it is sufficient to show in reply to many objections and difficulties *that a reply or solution is possible*. Whether hers is the ultimate and final rejoinder or not, is not vital to the discussion.

Yet even in this regard the instances are few indeed in which (as in the case of the "Confusion of Tongues," page 47), one would hesitate to adopt Miss Whately's arguments ; and they do not modify in the least the hearty commendation, and as far as it may be of any value, recommendation, of this admirable little volume which I am permitted to offer. The devout and earnest Christian worker who gave it to the English readers, and who has

shown in her own life-work how Christian fervor can accompany a clear and logical mind, how "dry light" and loving labor can coexist, will rejoice, if it shall accomplish in the other great division of the English-speaking family some of the good it was intended to do in Great Britain and Ireland.

JOHN HALL, D. D.

NEW YORK, January, 1880.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION -----	PAGE	9
--------------------	------	---

OBJECTIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

SECTION I.

Discrepancies in Narrative, Chronology, etc. -----	31
--	----

SECTION II.

Difficulties connected with Questions of Science, Natural History, and what may be called the Physical Wonders related in Scripture -----	36
---	----

SECTION III.

Apparent Moral Difficulties in the Old Testament History ---	53
--	----

OBJECTIONS TO THE NEW TESTAMENT.

SECTION I.

The New Testament Miracles -----	81
----------------------------------	----

SECTION II.

On the Genuineness of the Gospels-----	91
--	----

OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIANITY GENERALLY.

SECTION I.

Christian Doctrine and Practice -----	102
---------------------------------------	-----

SECTION II.

Objections connected with the Doctrine of the Atonement ---	120
---	-----



APPENDIX-----	137
---------------	-----

HOW TO ANSWER OBJECTIONS TO REVEALED RELIGION.

INTRODUCTION.

IN a well-disciplined army, the officers are not only trained to handle arms and resist an attack from the enemy, but are instructed in the most efficient and successful modes of laying siege to fortresses, defending important stations from assailants, and, in short, are prepared in every way to meet any plans that may be laid against them.

In this, as in many other cases, it is sadly true that “the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.” The Christian soldier, contending for the truth, is too often content with making a vague trust in God’s help a cloak for indolence and slackness in making use of the powers which were given him to be used against the enemies of the truth. We have to deal with an

unsleeping, ever-ready antagonist, one who knows every inch of the battle-ground, and has an eagle eye to spy out our weak points. Do we meet him prepared as we should be for the battle?

True, we have a never-failing tower of strength at hand. The Captain of our salvation is never far from us. But he has never encouraged us to believe that he will work a miracle to do for us what we can do ourselves. And as he has endowed us with reason and understanding and memory, we are bound to use these good gifts not only in what concerns this life, but in matters of higher import. We are called on to be "faithful," not only in administering the "unrighteous mammon," but not the less, surely, in what concerns the "true riches." And our plain duty is to be prepared to meet the devices and snares which the enemy of our souls is ever on the watch to plan against us.

At the present day he appears to be peculiarly active in trying to shake men's faith in revealed religion. There has been no lack of attempts of this kind ever since Christianity was first preached; but in our age this anti-Christian spirit seems to be pervading all classes of society and almost every department of literature. Many scientific men are sparing no pains in trying to turn the knowledge

they have acquired into weapons against the revelation of Him who is the Author of Nature. Many of our literary men are tainted with the same spirit ; some openly avow it, and more still are covertly and cautiously carrying on the same unholy warfare. In every walk of life we are liable to meet with those who will bring forward objections—which sometimes appear very plausible to inexperienced persons—against the truth of Christianity.

These critics do not always call themselves unbelievers ; some of them profess a great respect for Christianity and admiration for much of its teaching ; but the *historical* parts of the Bible, they say, cannot be received as worthy of trust. The *moral* precepts of the gospel they acknowledge to be noble and wise ; some of them, however, confine their approbation to the first three Gospels, objecting to what they term the *abstruse doctrine* of the fourth ; but most are agreed in admiration of the chief part of the former.

They allege that it would be wiser for Christian writers and teachers not to weaken their own cause by taking their stand on the truthfulness of histories which present so many difficulties, and against which so many objections can be urged ; but to be content with basing their faith, and seeking to en-

able others to do the same, not on the *facts* recorded in the Bible, but on the pure and sublime morality of the Sermon on the Mount and other gospel discourses, leaving abstruse doctrines on the one hand, and histories on the other, completely out of the question. Some may express these views more fully and plainly than others; but this is the general drift of what writers of this class inculcate on the subject.

Many, who do not themselves doubt the truth of the Scripture history, are taken in by the apparent fairness and moderation of these arguments, and are led by timidity, or indolence, or a mistaken though well-intentioned desire for peace, to yield the point disputed, and to allow that, after all, Christianity rests mainly on its holy and pure moral lessons; and that even though we ourselves may be persuaded of the authenticity of its history, still we may venture, for the sake of peace and a more extended influence of Christian teaching, to leave the question of historical accuracy, as it were, on one side.

But such persons do not perceive that this conclusion is founded on a total misapprehension of what Christianity really is. They are judging it as if it were a mere system of philosophy, like the teaching of Socrates or Plato or Confucius.

Now the great difference between the Christian religion and every system of this kind is, that it is not a religion of doctrines only, but of *doctrines founded on facts*. The holiness inculcated is a holiness springing from love to God, based on a living faith in Christ ; and that faith in Christ is a belief in him not simply as a *Teacher*, but as the *God-man*, taking our nature on himself, that he might die for our sins and rise again for our justification. Rom. 4:25.

The foundation-stone of Christianity is the *fact* of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and that death and resurrection form the central point on which the Scripture narrative hinges.

The history of man's fall and redemption is like a perfect building, every part so fitly joined together that one stone cannot be removed or its place altered without the whole falling. And to talk of separating the gospel teaching from the facts on which it is based is as idle as to try to separate the coloring of a picture from its outline. Christianity must stand or fall according as the history on which it is built is received or rejected ; to overthrow the one is to overthrow the other.

For the last eighteen centuries unbelievers have

been trying in every way, openly or covertly, to overthrow the arguments for the truth of revealed religion. No history we possess, ancient or modern, has been so severely tested. No history which had rested on a foundation one whit less secure could have stood a tenth part of the attacks which, since the early days of its first beginning, have been directed against it. No efforts have been spared to shake men's faith in it. And it has generally been found that the very endeavors made to storm the fort have only tended to prove more fully that it is impregnable.

But in our days these discussions are not, as they once were, mainly confined to the learned few. Young persons in every position in life are exposed to the danger of meeting with those who will bring forward objections to the foundation truths of our faith ; and this, not after the manner of open scoffers, but in a tone so apparently moderate and plausible that it may easily take in an inexperienced hearer. It is of no use to shut our eyes and ears to this state of things, and to fancy we shall be safe by ignoring it. The only security is to be well prepared beforehand. True, no study and no reasoning power will supply the place of a heart truly taught by the Spirit of God, and of a humble, candid mind,

such as only the influence of that blessed Spirit can give. But our part is to be armed on all sides ; and it is surely incumbent on all to seek, in the words of the apostle, to be “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” 1 Pet. 3 : 15.

It may be a help to some young students of the Bible to point out a few of the objections usually put forward, and the difficulties started, by those who attack the Christian religion, and some of the ways in which they can be most effectually answered.

But before entering upon this part of the subject, a few general remarks may not be out of place. And, first, we have to keep in mind that we are not called on, either in the case of Christianity or of any other great truth, to answer *all* the objections which could possibly be brought forward.

No discovery has ever been made, no history has ever been related, to which objections, and even valid ones, might not be made.

But the wise course, with respect to all these, is neither to ignore nor deny them, but simply to point out that they are outweighed by the greater objections on the other side.

And this is our business in respect of the argu-

ments brought forward against Christianity: not to declare hastily that *no* objections can possibly be urged, but to prove, as we easily may, that the difficulties on the *opposite* side are immeasurably greater than any possible ones that can be alleged against our religion. Difficulties we cannot escape: if we disbelieve that Christianity came from God, we must believe that it came from men; and on this side of the question we must accept things far harder to believe than any which are offered to us on the other.

To prove Christianity to be true is one thing; to answer every cavil which can be brought against it is another, and the attempt would hardly be profitable.

Still, in an age in which objections are continually brought forward in one shape or another, and in which we cannot escape hearing and reading about them, it is well to be prepared to answer those commonly urged. Not that it would be wise for any young student to engage, in general, in the perusal of books containing objections of this kind; that would be going voluntarily into temptation, which we have no right to do, and in which we cannot expect help from above. And we know not what advantages we may give our spiritual enemy

over us, in some moment of weakness, if we rashly enter the battle when the Lord has not called us. But when the adversary meets us, then we are plainly called on by our Captain to be ready, as soldiers of Christ, with "the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit," to repel his attacks; and to be rightly able to do this we must be on our guard, and "look that our arms be bright," and ourselves prepared when the call comes to defend the Lord's cause, in his strength.

And we need to use our reason and common sense for this; for even in upholding truth inexperienced Christians may sometimes put themselves inadvertently, so to say, in the enemy's hands, by leaving some weak point in their armor undefended, or laying themselves open to attack in return, where it might be avoided by a little care. It is to help those who feel this difficulty in finding suitable answers for themselves that the few suggestions which follow are given. It is hoped that they may put the student in the way to follow up the same plan for himself, and indicate the line he should take in repelling his adversary's efforts.

We shall find that the part of the Bible most generally chosen as the point of attack is the Old Testament. Many who admit, wholly or partially,

the truth of the New Testament, endeavor to separate it from the Old ; and many, even of those who do not themselves profess openly to reject this last, are exceedingly averse to any systematic attempt being made to defend its authenticity, or at all events to making it in any sense the battle-ground. "It is mere narrowness and cowardice," they assert, "to speak as if the question of the truth of the Christian religion could be in any way affected by these doubts."

"The faith of Christians," they will say, "rests, not on these ancient histories, but on the sublime teaching of the New Testament. What have questions about the creation of the world, or the wanderings of the Israelites, to do with this? Let us rest on the evidence given by the holy counsels and beautiful life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and leave these other matters in their proper place, side by side with old records about Egypt or Nineveh."

How will you reply to such reasoning? You will often meet with it, both in books and conversation.

It may seem very easy at first, some will say, coolly to sever the link between the Old and New Testaments, but in point of fact we shall find that the two *must stand or fall together*. Our Lord and

his apostles and evangelists have deliberately, if we may venture so to say, staked their own mission and their character, not only as teachers sent from God, but even (taking lower ground) as *truthful* teachers, on the Old Testament. It is referred to at every page ; its very histories are quoted continually as *true* histories ; its prophecies mentioned as fulfilled. The Lord Jesus Christ appeals to Moses and the prophets in support of his own divine mission. He comes (in his own words) to fulfil the law. He declares that no jot or tittle of it can pass away. He gives his life to save men from the punishment they had merited in transgressing its commands. Moses wrote of him, he says. He comes as the Messiah, promised first to Adam and Eve at the fall, then to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then by the lips of Moses, then by David, and the whole line of prophets. His mission, as his own teaching testifies, must stand or fall with the Old Testament.

“Oh, but,” the objectors reply, “we must remember that, as a man, our Lord was a Jew, and of course his knowledge of history could not be expected to be better than that of other Jews. He was sent on earth, not to teach us earthly wisdom, but heavenly truth, and therefore we have no more right to look for perfectly clear historical teaching

from him than for a system of natural philosophy or chemistry."

How will you reply to this?

By pointing out that the truth of the Old Testament narrative is *essentially connected with the very thing* he came on earth to teach us. If an ambassador comes to our country from another land, it may not signify to us whether he is perfectly instructed or no in heraldry or antiquarian lore, or even in the early history of his own country; *but if he is not clear on the subject of his credentials*—the certificates of his being a real ambassador, sent by the government of his own country; if he brings papers which cannot be verified and authenticated, there must be an end of all confidence in him.

Now, the truth of the Old Testament history is inseparably involved, so to speak, in the *credentials* of our Lord as the founder of our religion. He came, not merely as a divine Teacher, not only, even, as the Son of God sent to save us, but as the *centre* to which the whole of the Old Testament history points. He came, distinctly and expressly, by his own declaration, as the promised Messiah, as the Seed of the Woman, announced in the third chapter of Genesis, who was to crush the power of

the Serpent and redeem man from the consequences of the fall. He came as the antitype of the Passover Lamb (as declared by John the Baptist, clearly with His own sanction), as the Redeemer and Saviour represented by the Brazen Serpent in the wilderness, and by the bloody sacrifices under the law of Moses. He declared himself to be the Prophet whom Moses had announced in the Book of Deuteronomy. He declared himself to be the true Bread from heaven typified by the Manna, the true Temple of God, the true King of the Jews, the Son of David and yet his Lord. If he was deceived in these credentials of his, all based on the Old Testament history, he could not have been a true Messenger sent from God. And if he were *not*, and yet declared himself to be one, he, and his disciples also, must either have been the wildest and maddest of enthusiasts and fanatics, or the most unscrupulous of impostors. We cannot escape this dilemma, and no one has ever been able to explain it away. If we would receive Jesus as our Lord and Master, our Saviour, Prophet, Priest, and King—and to do less than this is virtually to reject him—we must, if we would be commonly reasonable and honest, receive the Old Testament histories on which he based his mission.

The difficulties which are felt by many in the study of the Old Testament history may be generally referred to three principal heads.

Under the first are comprised all that may be called historical and chronological difficulties, namely, the apparent discrepancies in dates, periods of time, and the account of certain events.

Under the second we may class those cases in which certain things are related in a manner apparently inconsistent with the results of the discoveries made by science in modern times in astronomy, geology, and natural philosophy generally.

The third head comprises what may be called *moral* difficulties, namely, the cases in which actions are commended, sanctioned, or even commanded, which seem hard to reconcile with our belief in God's infinite justice and mercy.

Before attempting to notice these difficulties, as they meet us in particular passages, we may make a few general remarks on each class respectively.

With regard to the first, or historical, class of difficulties, the simplest way of meeting them is this: We cannot pretend to explain or reconcile all the apparent discrepancies which present themselves; but we can safely affirm that they are no more than might be reasonably expected before-

hand in histories so ancient and so fragmentary as those of the Old Testament. To judge of them as we judge of an event recorded in our newspapers, or even in one of our modern histories, would be simply absurd and unreasonable. And yet we do continually meet with discrepancies in narratives of recent events both in histories and newspapers. But *there* we have, sooner or later, the means of gaining information which enables us to reconcile the apparent contradictions ; not always at first, for we know how often the account of some public transaction is recorded in some journal or reported letter, contradicted, explained, one account collated with another, before we gain a clear idea of the true state of the case. We know how many hot and prolonged controversies have been carried on between modern historians about certain events recorded, and how difficult it often is to come to any conclusion at all satisfactory. And this with regard to transactions on which a perfect blaze of light has been thrown by contemporary memoirs, letters, archives, and chronicles of every kind. If we sometimes fail to fit the dissected map of history correctly in the bright gaslight of modern days, is it wonderful that we should fail when we have only the faint and feeble lamp of records made almost

before what we call ancient history had even begun?

Archbishop Whately, in his little book entitled “*Historic Doubts on the Existence of Napoleon Bonaparte*,” points out how easily the history of the first fifteen years of this century might appear to be a mere tissue of contradictions if related in the loose, unconnected manner in which Scripture history is given.

The same may be said of many other occurrences in modern history; the conquest of Mexico by Cortez may be cited as one example out of many. If that wonderful and romantic history had been written as Scripture history is written, and judged as skeptical writers judge Scripture history, it is utterly impossible it could stand such an ordeal.

And yet there is no page of modern history—scarcely any even of ancient or of mediæval—in which we have not more means of getting at the full truth than we have in the case of Scripture. The different and rival historians, as it were, check each other's accounts; even in the histories of Rome and Greece this is found. And yet plenty of discrepancies quite as great as those of Scripture can be found in all these records; and if we hear less of them it is because the acceptance or rejec-

tion of profane histories does not concern the acceptance or rejection of any great and important truths.

Then, if it be asked, Why could not the sacred writers have been inspired so to write as to avoid the possibility of mistakes? the answer is, that they were not commissioned to give us a detailed record of ancient history, but to throw light on those incidents which relate to the dealings of God with man. This was the main end and scope of their narrative, and everything which did not concern this was irrelevant, and therefore set aside.

Now, no one blames a narrator who undertakes to deal exclusively with one class of subjects because he does not bestow equal attention on all other subjects. No one expects, for instance, that a professedly geological or botanical description of some foreign country should also contain a minute description of the manners and customs of its inhabitants, or a record of its political history. And so, it is not fair to complain if the Scripture narratives are given, in one point of view, imperfectly, as long as they fulfil (as they evidently do) the *main object* for which they were compiled.

With regard to the second class of objections—those which may contain what we may call the *sci-*

entific difficulties—nearly the same answer will meet them. Scripture was not intended to teach us the truths which we can discover for ourselves, such as those of geology, astronomy, and natural philosophy: it was given us to teach us what we could *not* by any wisdom find out for ourselves, namely, what God has done for man, and what his will is with regard to us.

In relating natural occurrences, they are stated as *phenomena*, that is to say, as they appear to our eyes. And, after all, this is the way we habitually state them. We speak of “the sun rising and setting,” etc., in ordinary narratives. In a scientific treatise this might be called incorrect, but not in a narrative of every-day transactions. And we have no right to cavil at the Scripture writers for expressing themselves just as ordinary writers do, namely, describing what passed as it would appear to the eye of an uninstructed man.*

With regard to the third great class of difficulties, those, namely, which concern the character of actions permitted or commanded in Scripture, we shall generally find that these difficulties are all finally referable to one great and mighty mystery which no man, whether Christian, Deist, or Atheist,

* See Note A, Appendix.

has been ever able to solve, namely, the Origin of Evil. The question, "Why was evil permitted in the world?" is one which, with our present limited faculties, we cannot expect to answer. And we do not escape the difficulty by rejecting Christianity.

It is quite true, as has often been remarked, that we can see how wonderfully the power and goodness of God have been displayed in the combat with evil, and most especially in the glorious scheme of Man's Redemption, which could not have taken place but for man's ruined and lost condition. In this way, as we may clearly see, good has been brought out of evil, and man's fall and its terrible consequences have been so ordered as to manifest the wisdom, power, and love of our Creator and Redeemer with marvellous force and brilliancy. But, again, if the objection were raised, "Could not equal good have been effected in another way without these terrible evils?" the wisest man must remain as unable as the most ignorant child to answer such a question.

It may well be that in the nature of things there should be an absolute impossibility that good should be effected without the permission of evil. We can see that if man were so hedged in as to be unable to choose the wrong way, he would really be incapable of practising what we call virtue. And it may

be that if we could understand all fully, we should see that throughout the whole creation, to effect good without any evil being permitted may be as utterly impossible as we can see it is for the three angles of a triangle to make anything but two right angles, or for two and two to make anything but four.

But in our present state, and with our limited powers, we are not qualified to judge of this: we can only accept what God tells us, on the statement of his word. To attempt to meet such difficulties by reasoning would be as idle as for one ignorant of ship-building to try and prove that a certain vessel was seaworthy. If he has faith in the skill and honesty of the builder, he has good reason for believing, on the strength of that builder's assurance, that the ship is fit for sailing; but it is quite out of his province to prove, by reasoning, a matter with which he is wholly unacquainted.

In fact, in all that concerns such questions, we are as unable to form a judgment, as a man born blind would be to discuss the uses of a telescope. It is said that when the blind mathematician Sanderson was asked if he would desire to have the gift of sight to carry on his researches, he replied that he thought arms long enough to reach and touch

the sun and moon would be much more useful. This answer shows that he was utterly unable to conceive what sight really was, and could not therefore judge of its powers.

But may there not be many things connected with the mysterious questions we have alluded to, and others besides, which are as completely out of the reach of our powers of comprehension as the idea of sight was to the blind philosopher? And if so—and we cannot at all events be sure that it is not so—is it not the part of wisdom to rest contented with exercising our judgment on such things as do lie within the grasp of our powers, trusting the rest to that merciful Creator whom we have abundant reason for trusting, who has given us proofs of his wisdom and love, and who has revealed to us in his word that the evil whose existence is so great a difficulty to us now will be eventually triumphed over and overcome by his power?

We may now proceed to consider in detail some of the objections we are most likely to meet with against the Old Testament history. We shall not attempt to enter into all that has been said or can be said on both sides; this would be a work to fill many volumes, and would hardly be of use to ordinary readers; all we attempt to do here is to indi-

cate the substance of the principal popular objections, if we may so call them, which are generally brought forward, and the line it is best for those not possessed of deep learning, or practised in controversy, to take in answering them. Even if we should not be called on to give direct answers in conversation or writing, these rejoinders may help us, in our solitary reflections, to clear up difficulties which might otherwise painfully perplex us, and doubts which might harass us, and even have a deadening influence on our spiritual life.

OBJECTIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

SECTION I.

DISCREPANCIES IN NARRATIVE, CHRONOLOGY, ETC.

OBJECTION I. That the description of Cain's crime and its punishment is totally inconsistent with the previous history, which seems to imply that he and his brother were the only inhabitants of the earth. How, in this case, could Cain have cause to fear that other men would pursue him and slay him?

ANSWER. This assumes a great deal more than the narrative requires. We are not told how many years elapsed, after Cain and Abel became grown men, before the event which led to the first murder; nor can we tell how many among the "sons and daughters," who are afterwards mentioned as born to Adam and Eve, may have been born and grown up and became parents themselves, before Cain

went forth as a wanderer. The history is so loosely stated, that it leaves room for a variety of conjectures; and though it would be premature to build on them as certainties, with the very limited knowledge that we possess, still, unless they could be proved untenable, the difficulty in the narrative could not be regarded as insurmountable. It is certain that among scattered pastoral tribes, leading a nomadic life, the members of a family may easily be separated so as to become virtually almost strangers in no long space of time; and in the days when there was but one family on the earth, this would even more easily happen than in later times.

OBJECTION 2. That the sacrifices prescribed in the Levitical law could not (except under suppositions which involve actual absurdity) be performed during the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness.

ANSWER. We may reply that it is a wholly gratuitous supposition to assume that they *were* so offered. We are apt sometimes to forget, in reading the history, that in the first instance the Israelites had clearly been intended only to spend a short time in the desert on their way to the land of Canaan. The Law, and all its minute and full ceremonial requisitions, were given on this supposition.

They were directed to make offerings of corn, first-fruits, etc., which could not have been made till they had taken up their abode in the Land of Promise. See Lev. 2:12, 14; 22:10-14, 22, etc.

When the national act of rebellion and disobedience, recorded in Numbers 14, brought on the whole of that generation the punishment which condemned them to wander forty years in the wilderness, they were, in fact, placed by their sin in a state of virtual excommunication. But the mercy of God, to show them that he would never finally desert them, and to keep in mind the necessity of atonement, devised the institution of the Red Heifer, which could be offered up even in their wandering life without difficulty, and serve, as it were, as a kind of substitute, during their stay in the wilderness, for those more elaborate sacrifices which it would have been scarcely possible to carry out during a wandering life in the desert.

It is supposed by some that this necessary postponement of the full observance of the law is alluded to in Amos 5:25. The question, "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and burnt-offerings forty years in the wilderness?" certainly seems to imply that they had not done so.*

* See Bishop Wordsworth's Commentary.

OBJECTION 3. That many of the accounts of battles, changes of government, and other transactions, especially in the Books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, contain great discrepancies in chronology, and in many cases equally considerable ones in the narration of events, which with the closest examination it is found impossible to explain or to harmonize.

ANSWER. We have already, in the Introduction, discussed this point, and therefore it is not needful to enter into details here. It is true that there are several of these narrations against which objection has been made, which even an unlearned reader, carefully studying his English Bible, comparing passage with passage, and using his common sense (which some people are apt to think superfluous in matters connected with religion), will find he can reconcile and explain without difficulty.

But though this is a most profitable and interesting occupation in our own private studies, it is generally safer, in arguing with objectors, to abstain from attempting explanation of these points. We may succeed in many instances, perhaps, in clearing up the difficulty ; but fresh cases will be brought forward, and some of these, for want of the necessary data, it will be found impossible to harmonize

satisfactorily. Then the champion of Scripture truth stands in the position of one vanquished by the arguments of his adversaries ; and this, as before observed, may not only weaken his cause, but react injuriously on his own mind. The safest ground to take is the ground our adversaries would take if the same objections were urged against the histories of Greece and Rome. They would at once reply, if attacked on these points, that the discrepancies and inconsistencies in those early histories are only formidable from the want of the data which would enable us to reconcile them could we fill up the blanks in the accounts. We have only to ask our opponents to exercise the same candor in respect to Scripture narrative which they do in reference to ancient profane histories.

With regard to chronology, we know so little of the earliest modes of computing time and number, that the greatest wonder would be if the early records could be perfectly clear. Of one thing we may be certain : that if the Scripture histories had been the work of impostors intending to deceive, they would have taken good care to smooth away all irregularities of this kind in their records.

SECTION II.

DIFFICULTIES CONNECTED WITH QUESTIONS OF SCIENCE, NATURAL HISTORY, AND WHAT MAY BE CALLED THE PHYSICAL WONDERS RELATED IN SCRIPTURE.

OBJECTION I. That the account of the creation, as given in Genesis I, is one which involves impossibilities and absurdities ; for the creation of the whole world and all its productions in six days is utterly inconceivable : the discoveries of geologists have proved that the surface of the earth has been subjected to a number of changes, which, judging from the time we see required by analogous processes, could not be effected in less time than thousands of years. Also, that the order of creation, as there described, could not have taken place in the manner stated ; as we see traces of *repeated* creations of vegetables, animals, etc., many races of each having apparently passed away and been succeeded by others, belonging, to all appearance, to a much earlier period than any of which we have records.

ANSWER. In the first place, we have no means

of ascertaining what periods of time were represented by the "days" of creation. The mention of "evening and morning" does not certainly prove that they were days like ours, twenty-four hours long; in fact, before the sun and stars were visible they could not have been altogether answering to what we call "days." And we have evidence from other parts of Scripture that the word "day" is not exclusively used for a period of twenty-four hours.*

In the second place, even allowing that the "days" were what we now call days, we cannot, with our limited knowledge, venture to assert confidently that a process which we see effected only in a certain number of years, could never, under different conditions, take place in less time. We cannot tell to what extent even the natural forces with which we are acquainted might, under certain conditions, be increased in intensity, and might therefore work more rapidly than appears now conceivable to us.

Thirdly, we are not told, nor have we any means of conjecturing, how long a period may have elapsed

* Hugh Miller, in his "Testimony of the Rocks," has discussed this point with force and clearness. He and others are of opinion that the "days" were long periods of time of uncertain duration.

between the “beginning,” in which God “created the heaven and the earth,” and the time when the earth is described as “without form and void.” That interval may have lasted thousands of years, in the course of which many changes may have taken place.

It is remarkable that the word “created” (*bara*, in the Hebrew), used in the first verse, is never used again throughout the first chapter of Genesis, except in describing the origin of some of the animals and of man. In all other cases the word answering to our word *made* is employed, a word which implies, in all languages, the formation of something out of existing materials, in contradistinction to “creation.” An original invention is described in common speech as a *creation*; but houses, machines, etc., are *made*.*

Observe, that in suggesting these solutions, we must be on our guard against the temptation to choose whichever of them best satisfies our own mind, and then to insist on it as a truth which cannot be disputed, and expect our adversary to accept it. If we do this, we are only setting up a mark for the enemy to fire at. He will try to prove our theory to be non-conclusive, and if he can over-

* See Note B, Appendix.

throw it he will think he has effectually vanquished us ; nay, may perhaps half persuade us that the victory is on his side. What we have to do is to take our stand on a ground from which we cannot be driven, namely, the *possibility* (we might well say, probability) of solutions existing to all these difficulties *if* we could know or understand them. The solutions we have alluded to as conceivable and no-wise incredible may not, any one of them, be the true one ; but the circumstance of our being able, even with our imperfect data, to perceive the *possibility* of some one of them being true, may show us that other explanations may exist, even if these do not hold good.

We have no right to assume as certain, for instance, that thousands of years passed between the "beginning," when the heavens and earth were created, and the time when the earth was described as "without form and void ;" but we certainly cannot venture to assume that thousands of years may *not* have elapsed. And while we see that any one of the suppositions named would entirely harmonize with the Scripture narrative, we have no right to complain of that narrative as irreconcilable with the discoveries of science. The account in the Book of Genesis states nothing which contradicts in any

way these discoveries ; all it affirms is, that there was a time--early or late--when this created world was in a state of chaos. And as we see every day houses which have been built for years reduced to a state very like chaos in the process of rebuilding and altering, this need not shock even *our* limited experience.

But we must keep in mind that we have no right to speak of any transaction as *impossible*, unless we are in a position to judge of the circumstances under which it took place, which of course we never can in the case of the Creation.

OBJECTION 2. That the account of the first appearance of light, and of the sun, moon, and stars, is given as if our earth, which we know to be a mere speck in the universe, was the centre at least of our planetary system, and as if the sun, moon, and stars were only created to give light to our little world.

ANSWER. It is not said either that light was then and there created, or that the sun and moon were. The word "created," as we observed before, is never used in relation either to light generally or the heavenly bodies. "Let there be light," only implies a command that light should *appear* then and there, not that it had never existed before. The

whole history of the creation is given only as concerns our earth. The "lights" in the heaven were caused to appear, and made available for the use of the earth after the earth was created. Whether this was done by clearing away some thick mist or cloud which had obscured the light, or in what other manner, it is of course impossible to say; but it is clear that the expression, "God made two great lights," no more implies that they were at that moment called into existence, than the expression, "making a fire," would imply that fire had never existed before.

We must never lose sight of this important truth, that the histories of the Bible relate solely to PHENOMENA as seen by our eyes, and have no reference to the causes of those phenomena. To explain these would have been foreign to the purpose for which the history was written; and we have no more right to complain of their unscientific and popular language than we have of a modern narrative (as before observed) for alluding to the "waxing and waning of the moon," etc.

OBJECTION 3. That the accounts of the extraordinary length of life of the early patriarchs, and the gradual cessation of that length of life after the Deluge, seem utterly unaccountable and incredi-

ble on any rational grounds, and contrary to our daily experience.

ANSWER. The circumstance that in our days the life of man seldom exceeds by many years the “three score and ten” of the Psalmist, does not at all exclude the possibility of its lasting longer under different circumstances. It would be very rash to conclude that, because certain plants in our countries never exceed a given height, therefore it is impossible they should attain a greater one in a different climate and soil.

We cannot, of course, venture to give a decided opinion where so little is known ; but some have conjectured that the use of the tree of life by our first parents, who doubtless ate of it before they left the Garden of Eden (the wording of the original by no means excluding that supposition), may have had an effect on their descendants, which was not exhausted for a considerable time, in strengthening their constitutions and enabling them to resist the progress of decay.*

OBJECTION 4. That the account of Noah’s building the ark is a description of a work utterly impossible to accomplish ; for that such an erection could not have stood in the water, or floated ; and that (as

* See Note C, Appendix.

the Zulu observed to Dr. Colenso) it is impossible that so large a number of animals of all kinds should have been able to find their way into the ark, and voluntarily to enter and remain there.

ANSWER. As to the first part of the objection, we may observe that we are not in a position to judge of the possibility of the ark's floating. We cannot be sure of rightly understanding the meaning of the terms used in the Book of Genesis; and even if we did, we know too little of the circumstances under which the vessel was built to be able to form anything like a clear idea of its construction, and therefore to judge as to its probable success.

With regard to the second part of the objection, the answer is still more simple. We may ask our opponents in their turn, "How do you undertake to explain the equally wonderful things which take place every day, when birds, bees, and fishes find their way through trackless forests and up rivers, for hundreds of miles, to procure food for their young, or deposit their eggs in a suitable place?" If you reply, "Their instinct leads them," we answer, "Why should not He who gave that instinct for their guidance in their ordinary life, be able, if he saw fit, to endow them on that special occasion

with the instinct to lead them to the only refuge from impending death?"

OBJECTION 5. That it is impossible that animals representing all existing species could be at once contained in any one habitation, however large, or that food sufficient to sustain so many creatures for so long a time could be contained in any one place.

ANSWER. It is quite gratuitous to assume that the ark contained representatives of all the species of animals now existing.

Both in the animal and vegetable world, an infinite number of varieties often spring from one genus, and those varieties may at last become so fixed and definite as to be called *species*. But reckoning them only as varieties, how numerous are the races that have sprung from the human species alone; and in the case of the dog and some other animals, the differences are even more marked. We are not obliged to believe that all the varieties which are now known existed at that early period, or that it was requisite that even every existing variety should be represented. All that the Scripture account implies is that there should be a pair to represent every *class* of animals then existing, and a sevenfold representation of the few kinds used in sacrifice, including only one species of birds, and three of ruminant

animals alone. Therefore it is quite conceivable that the ark may not have contained many more animals than a large menagerie.*

OBJECTION 6. That if the Flood, as described in Genesis 6 and 7, had spread itself over the whole earth, effects would have been produced, and traces left, which must have been perceptible at the present day: also, that it seems, on such a supposition, difficult, if not impossible, to account for the circumstance of the animals in some parts of the world, in Australia especially, differing so widely in their leading characteristics from those of the "Old World;" as, had their representatives been in the ark, we should naturally have expected to find them scattered over all parts of the earth.

ANSWER. The force of this objection has nothing really to do with the truth of the narrative in Genesis. The account of the Deluge given there does not necessarily imply that it spread over the whole globe. All that is implied is that the whole of the *human race* was destroyed, and therefore the inhabited part of the earth submerged by the flood; but we have no reason at all to suppose that at so early a period in the world's history, the whole or even the largest part of the earth was peopled. In any

* See Note D, Appendix.

case, the contrary is far more probable, judging from the time it takes, with every facility of modern days, to people even a whole continent.*

OBJECTION 7. That the Scripture account of the confusion of tongues among the builders of the tower of Babel involves suppositions which are incredible ; that it is impossible to account either for their punishment or for their dispersion, on the grounds there stated ; and that the traces of a common origin to all languages, which have been generally observed by philologists, render the whole history of the “confusion of tongues” highly improbable.

ANSWER. Both friends and enemies of the cause have perplexed the question, by *taking for granted* what has not been expressly stated in Scripture. The cause of God’s displeasure is not distinctly stated ; but that the building of the tower must have involved an act of disobedience is plainly to be inferred ; and many who have studied the subject closely believe that the tower was intended to be used as an idol temple.

With regard to the miracle of dispersion, the original does not enable us decidedly to state its nature ; if, as is generally supposed, it was a sudden confusion in the spoken language, it is surely quite

* See Note E, Appendix.

conceivable that the common tongue should be changed in an instant into the various dialects, which do, in point of fact, originally spring from one source, from which they, usually, have deviated gradually and slowly, as the Italian and French from Latin, and the northern languages from Gothic. In such a case the miracle worked would simply have been to produce an effect *suddenly*, which is generally the work of time: and its suddenness would be quite sufficient (producing, as it naturally would, great dismay and alarm in those who were the objects of it) to account for the builders, in their bewilderment, abandoning their half-finished work.

But some expositors have doubted whether the miracle in question was one of confusion of spoken language at all. They incline to believe that the confusion was one not of speech, but of worship; and the word in the original, "lip," would certainly bear this interpretation better than that of "tongue." The word "lip" is frequently used in the Bible for "worship;" for example, in Hosea 14:2, and the almost parallel passage in Hebrews 13:12. And in Zephaniah 3:9, the words—"For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent"—the word in the margin is "lip," not

“language,”—and the context shows that worship, not merely speech, was there meant.

This, and other considerations, have led some to think that a confusion of worship, and not of tongues, was the miracle wrought at Babel; viz., disputes as to which god should be adored in the temple they were building, or as to the mode of worshipping him: which would appear likely to produce a more *permanent* division among the workers than any difficulty in making themselves understood, as our daily experience testifies in our own times, when workmen of various nations are continually emigrating to other countries, and joining in the labors of those whose speech is at first unintelligible to them. But the question is not one at all important to decide, since either way the account is perfectly intelligible.*

OBJECTION 8. That the miracle recorded in Joshua 10, of the “sun standing still,” is one which could not have taken place as described: since it must have involved the entire overthrow, for the time, of the solar system, and even could this have taken place without the inhabitants of the earth being utterly destroyed, traces of it must have been discernible to this day. The same may be said of the

* See Note F, Appendix.

moving backwards of the shadow of the dial of Ahaz, on the occasion of the sickness and recovery of Hezekiah.

ANSWER. In considering these questions, we cannot be too careful to keep in mind what has already been pointed out—that all the accounts of natural wonders in Scripture relate exclusively to *phenomena*, and are not concerned with the *causes* of those phenomena. A picture, as it were, is given us of the scene as it would strike an ordinary observer, and we are left to draw our own conclusions as to the means used to effect these outward manifestations.

In the present case, we may take notice that the expression, “the sun stood still,” cannot be taken literally by any one who believes in the Copernican system—as all educated persons do in our day. We know that what really moves is the earth, not the sun: and consequently, when Joshua addressed the sun, his invocation could only be answered by some appearance in the heavens which would have the effect desired. And a little consideration may show us that this could be easily done without affecting in any way the earth’s motion. For we all know that the sun appears to remain above the horizon every evening for several min-

utes after his disk has actually sunk below it ; the refraction of the rays of light producing the same effect as if he were actually in the heavens. And there is nothing incredible in the idea that such a phenomenon might be prolonged by some extraordinary power, for hours or even days, without any alteration in the course of the planets round the sun.

As we already observed, it is safest not to insist upon any theory, where all must be a matter of conjecture ; it is enough to say that the *appearance* would be all that could be required, and that this effect could be obtained without any of the results which would interrupt the ordinary course of nature. It is worthy of note, indeed, that two sets or pairs of words are used for “sun and moon” in the original Hebrew, in different parts of the Old Testament, one set appearing to designate the disks of the two heavenly bodies respectively, the other the rays of light issuing from them ; and that the latter is the one used in Joshua.

All this may be alleged on the ordinary supposition that prolonged light was what Joshua required ; but some authorities are of the opinion that the whole narrative would rather imply that *darkness*, not light, was needed, to continue the battle which

had begun at early dawn in the midst of a furious hailstorm.*

And, in this case, the difficulty would be yet more quickly solved ; as it is even easier to conjecture many ways in which prolonged darkness could be obtained, than in the case of light.

With regard to the other kindred miracle, the retreating of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz, Isa. 38 ; 2 Kings 20 : 10, it has been suggested that as the dial appears (from the marginal reading) to have been constructed as a flight of steps, on which the sun's shadow would gradually fall as it rose in the heavens, either a slight earthquake (no uncommon thing in those lands), which would have altered, for the time, the position of the steps, or a partial solar eclipse, making the shadow fall lower, would produce the effect described. And the circumstance of the Chaldean ambassadors coming from Assyria, where astronomy was so much studied, to inquire about the "wonder that was done in the land," proves both that it was a phenomenon of a kind peculiarly likely to interest them, and also that its action was confined to Palestine.

It is remarkable that the allusion to the curiosity of the Chaldeans as to the "wonder," is only

* See Note G, Appendix.

made in Chronicles, where that wonder is not related. In Isaiah and Kings, where it is, the visit is only spoken of as one of inquiry and condolence after the sickness of Hezekiah. Had the history been drawn up by an impostor, we should never have found this unstudied coincidence of the two different accounts, which thus fit so exactly into each other.

SECTION III.

APPARENT MORAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

OBJECTION I. That it seems inconsistent with the justice and mercy of God to punish the whole human race, in the persons of our first parents, for so apparently trifling a fault as that of eating the fruit of a tree which had been forbidden.

ANSWER. We have no right to measure the greatness or smallness of disobedience, in any case, by the greatness or smallness of the act in which it consists. A very trifling action, in itself, has often occasioned fatal consequences. The opening of a small postern gate by which an enemy could enter has caused the destruction of a city, and perhaps may have involved the fall of a nation. The stroke of a pen has brought men to the gallows. A trifling act of disobedience in a soldier on guard has often been punished with death. A spark let fall on a mine or powder magazine has caused wide-spread destruction.

Even with our limited vision, we can see what

mighty and fearful results may follow from what might be called trifling acts. How much more, then, can He in whose eyes nothing is either great or small, as we judge it, and who, reading the inmost thoughts of the heart, can see in small indications the signs of a deadly evil !

Man was put upon his trial—and his failure was as apparent in an instance seemingly so trifling, as it would have been in a matter which we might think more weighty and important in itself.

Why men could not be prevented from sinning altogether—why sin must entail such terrible consequences—these are questions we cannot attempt to answer. They are referable, as observed before, to the painful mystery of the origin of evil. We see that sin exists in the world ; that it makes itself manifest in the best-ordered communities, in the happiest and most carefully-trained families, and in the finest natural characters. We see every day that sin, even when committed under circumstances which afford more excuse than with our first parents, still often brings with it a heavy punishment, and its consequences sometimes entail bitter suffering on the children and even remote descendants of the sinner. The intemperate man bequeaths sickness—the criminal, a tarnished name—the

spendthrift, poverty—to his children. Sad as it is to see the innocent suffer from the guilt of their parents, we cannot escape the difficulty by denying revelation. It is wisest for us to own humbly that it belongs to the large class of subjects on which the wisest of mankind can only say, "I do not know." Revelation does not undertake to tell us the *cause*; but it points out the *remedy* which God has provided in the great scheme of redemption. And those who think they can escape the difficulty by rejecting the cure, act like a sick person who should refuse to accept the remedy offered him by his physician, unless it should be accompanied by an explanation how he caught the disease.

OBJECTION 2. That it is impossible a merciful Creator would have commanded Joshua and his companions to put all the inhabitants of Canaan to the sword, such a proceeding being quite inconsistent with what we read elsewhere of his goodness and long-suffering.

ANSWER. It is quite true that Joshua and the other judges of Israel were not commissioned to act in the spirit of the gospel. Our Lord himself drew a strong contrast between the two dispensations, when he rebuked his apostles for wishing to call down fire from heaven. But because the gos-

pel dispensation is one of mercy and longsuffering, we have no right to conclude that God can never deal with men differently. In that very gospel we are shown that he can and will punish offenders.

And we cannot look around us in the natural world without seeing proofs of his sometimes visiting men with manifestations of his power to destroy. Earthquakes, hurricanes, pestilences, and famines inflict even greater and more widespread destruction and suffering than the judgments on the Canaanites, and that with less apparent reason. We can only rest, in such cases, on the belief that such things must be permitted for reasons we cannot comprehend, and that the Judge of all the earth must do right. But, in the case of the Canaanites, it is clear from the allusions made in the Old Testament, that their wickedness was of so deep and abominable a character as to make their very existence on the face of the earth a mighty evil. When we read of the fearful cruelties perpetrated in honor of their idols by many heathen nations, as, for instance, the ancient Mexicans, and the ancient Britons and Saxons, and of the shocking and abominable crimes which are a part of the worship of idolaters, even in our own days, we can conceive what a blot on creation such a people as the Canaanites must have

been, and how dangerous the example of such neighbors to a people so prone to imitate other nations, and so inclined to idolatry as the Israelites were. It must have been as necessary to make an example of so wicked and polluted a nation as it is in our own days to punish great criminals. And probably the execution (say) of three or four desperate characters, in a year, might bear the same proportion to the community where they live and commit their crimes, as the whole nation of the Canaanites did to the whole inhabited world at that time. The execution of the *nation* was as needful in the case before us, as that of the *individual* in our own days. God was pleased to make his servants, Joshua and his companions and successors, act as his executioners, inflicting his judgments on those whom he saw fit to make an example of his severity. And the greater barbarism of the time in which they lived, enabled them to do this work without incurring the personal moral hurt which would be experienced in our days by any one called on to inflict such terrible wholesale destruction, however necessary.

In our days, in short, the injury the *executioners* of these judgments would suffer, might counterbalance the good done by the execution of justice,

and, consequently, God may not now deal with men in this way. He who can read the heart doubtless knew that Elijah, for example, would not experience the same moral injury, in calling down fire from heaven on the emissaries of the king, as that which James and John would have incurred had *they* been permitted to do the same.

That the unconscious children should have been involved in the same terrible destruction is indeed a painful part of the history ; but, first, we must remember that in all wars, conquests, or revolutions, such innocent victims must necessarily suffer, and the case of the Canaanites was not different from that of many others ; and, secondly, there can be no doubt that the children of so wicked a nation, had they survived, would have been brought up to follow the bad example of their parents. They might, indeed, have perished by the hand of those very parents, in the frightful sacrifices to Moloch ; and if not, they would have lived to be partakers in the abominations which their nation practised. It was, doubtless, morally impossible they could have escaped such a fate ; and thus we may consider that it was in mercy they were cut off before they were conscious of evil.

The Israelites were chosen to be witnesses of

the pure religion of Jehovah, and as his witnesses it was needful they should be kept apart, even, if necessary, by stern judgments, from all companionship with the wicked nations around them. And how mercifully, and with what readiness, any indications of a better spirit among members even of these nations were received and welcomed, is shown by the favor accorded to Rahab, in sparing not only herself, but her whole house, and permitting her to share the honor enjoyed by another Gentile woman, Ruth the Moabitess, of being an ancestress of the Messiah.

OBJECTION 3. That the conduct of many who commit actions which in our day would be looked on, not only as cruel, but as base and treacherous, is sometimes recorded in such a manner that the reader might be led to think God approved of and sanctioned such conduct. Under this head may be classed the act of Jael to Sisera, Judg. 4 and 5, the revolt of Jeroboam, the massacre perpetrated by Jehu, etc.

ANSWER. A good deal of confusion is caused, both in this and other cases, by confounding prophecy or history with precept. The warnings and threats of Scripture have often been fulfilled by men who were very far from serving and obeying

God. In the Old Testament we meet with frequent instances in which God made use of wicked men and wicked nations to fulfil his own purposes—as in the case of Pharaoh, in Egypt, of whom he says, “For this cause have I raised thee up ;” and again, when he made Assyria, Babylon, and finally Rome, his instruments of executing judgments on his rebellious people of Israel, on the one hand, and on wicked heathen nations who had contended against them, on the other.

But using men as instruments is not the same thing as sanctioning or approving their conduct ; it merely shows that his power can turn “the wrath of man to praise him.” Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the unbelieving Jews, were spoken of in the apostles’ inspired prayer, in Acts 4, as “gathered together to do whatsoever (His) counsel determined before to be done ;” and yet they were so far from having His sanction, that the Jews were about to undergo the sternest judgments as a punishment for their conduct to the Saviour He had sent them. The words of that Saviour himself were, “It is impossible but that offences must come, but woe to him through whom they come,” Luke 17:1. Judas himself had been the subject of prophecy ; his betrayal was a fulfilment of the Scriptures ; and yet

it was said of him, “ It had been good for him that he had never been born.”

In the case of Jael, it is a matter of discussion among learned commentators whether the passage describing her action may not have been incorrectly translated, and whether she may not have struck down Sisera (instead of killing him in his sleep), acting from a Divine commission.*

But it is not needful for ordinary students to enter into this question ; all we need reply to objectors is, that if she acted by Divine command, she was as truly God’s executioner as Joshua and others like him ; and if not, she must be looked on as one of those instruments whom he is pleased to make use of, without sanctioning or approving their conduct ; and Deborah’s praise of her must be regarded as an enthusiastic outpouring of the patriotic exultation of a Hebrew; and not as the authorized expression of God’s approval.

No one can study history, ancient or modern, without seeing how often the providence of God has so turned the evil designs of wicked men as to lead to consequences ultimately beneficial to the world at large. And this overruling power of God’s

* See Bishop Wordsworth’s “ Commentary on the Book of Judges.”

providence, which we are enabled to trace in the study of profane history, by watching the course of events, is pointed out to us, in sacred history, by the express statements of Scripture.

OBJECTION 4. That in the case of several individuals, but especially of David, a king is spoken of in the Old Testament as accepted by God and approved of by him, in spite of his life being stained by many actions which we should regard as highly criminal, quite as much so, in some instances, as those of other rulers who were rejected by God. David's treachery and murder of Uriah, for example, appear quite inconsistent with the character given of him as "a man after God's own heart."

ANSWER. In reading the histories of wrong-doing related in the Scriptures, we must keep in mind that we hear more of the wrong in these accounts, because it was blamed and punished; in other countries, as we may read in profane histories, the same things were done and passed unnoticed. David was punished with a punishment that lasted his whole life, for a crime which a heathen king would have committed without scruple. Most Eastern monarchs would have thought no more of putting a man to death who interfered in any of their schemes or projects, than of brushing away a fly

that annoyed them. But we hear of David's punishment and his repentance, and read the outpouring of his grief for his sin ; and therefore the objectors, who read very coolly of worse things done by Greeks and Romans, are eager to find fault with the choice of David as God's especial servant. Men have learned higher morality from the Bible, and then they turn round and attack their teacher !

Unless we keep in mind the principle alluded to above, we shall be liable to fall into serious mistakes in forming our judgments as to the praise or blame bestowed on the rulers of God's chosen people. And yet in ordinary life much the same thing occurs every day. A general or statesman is pronounced a good one if, besides being efficient and able in his calling, he is a thoroughly faithful and devoted servant of his government ; and even though his private life may be far from being stainless, an impartial historian, without excusing or glossing over these private blemishes, will still declare him a good servant of the state.

So it was in this case. David was a man after God's own heart, not because he was blameless in his life, but because its general tenor was that of strict fidelity and loyalty to his Divine Head. Throughout his whole checkered life, in spite of

many faults and errors, he was thoroughly devoted to the Lord. And therefore there is no failure in moral discernment when he is pronounced a king who was acceptable in God's sight. His acts of real disobedience were few, and always deeply repented of.

We must not forget the different standard of those semi-barbarous times; and when we see how often the purest Christian teaching fails to influence men in our days, we should be rather inclined to humble ourselves for our shortcomings, under far higher privileges, than to judge harshly of the failures of those who had so much fainter a light to walk by.

OBJECTION 5. That even while we leave on one side, as it were, the cases in which cursory readers are apt to confound prophecy with precept, in judging of doubtful actions recorded in Scripture, there remain some incidents which cannot be referred to such a class; cases in which some actions appear punished more severely than we should have expected beforehand, while others, which seem to us really worse, pass comparatively unnoticed.

ANSWER. This difficulty is one which includes several instances which have puzzled many readers who were far from being captious or skeptical, and

therefore it will be best to consider some of these cases in detail. But first, we may make a few general remarks which will apply to them all.

In reading this part of the Old Testament, we must keep in mind that we are tracing the history of a *theocracy*—that is, of a government in which the supreme Head and Governor was the Lord Jehovah himself. It is the only instance in history of such a government sanctioned and carried out by God himself. True, all rulers are morally responsible to him; but with Israel and Judah it was something more than this. Their judges and kings were not the heads of the state in the sense that monarchs are now: they were the delegates and vicegerents of God, responsible to him exactly in the same way as that in which the second authority in a state is responsible to the first or head—as a prime minister is to an absolute king. They were commanded to “inquire of the Lord” before taking any important step; and they received special Divine revelations (either through one of the prophets, or, in some manner we do not understand, through the high priest), telling them what to do and what to avoid.

God dealt, then, with these delegates, not merely as he deals with other men, but in his capacity of

Supreme Ruler of the state. Now in all states and nations where there is any government at all, the crime of *high treason* is the offence punished with the utmost severity. Does this mean that high treason is really a more heinous sin than any other? Not so; but it is punished more severely than other things because it strikes at the root of all governing power and all authority in the state.

The instances of disobedience in the judges and kings, and other national representatives, were not only cases of rebellion against God as such—that would have been the case with any wilful sin—but of disobedience to the highest authority in the state—that is, of treason. They were political and not individual sins, and as such they were punished with the most direct and visible judgments.

In the same way are to be explained the punishments of idolatry. The sin against God of breaking the first commandment is as great now as it was then; but it is not, as it was then, the crime of high treason. Therefore these cases in the Old Testament can never be fairly cited to defend the practice of using coercion in religious matters, because the state of things when God himself condescended to be the supreme head of the Jewish government is one which has nowhere else occurred.

When the Lord Jesus commenced his public ministry, the Jews expected he would have revived this theocracy, and have placed himself at their head as their earthly monarch ; but he distinctly declared that his kingdom in this dispensation was not of this world ; and therefore the religious and political affairs of a nation can never justly and rightly be so united as they were under the judges and kings of Israel.

Now, if we examine the crimes which were visited with the extremest severity in the history of those judges and kings, we shall find they all come in some way under the head either of sanction, direct or indirect, of idolatry, or of disobedience to some plain command of God. For in cases where the service of God in the tabernacle, or the messages he gave to his prophets to deliver, were concerned, the smallest dereliction of duty was punished, even in private individuals, with the severest judgments, because all this came under the head of high treason to their Divine Sovereign. Thus the priests were obliged to follow the regulations of the Levitical law to the minutest letter, on pain of death, if infringed, and Uzzah actually incurred that penalty for touching the sacred ark. These punishments, like the penalties inflicted for political crimes in all

countries, were necessary for the sake of deterring others; and among a semi-barbarous and imperfectly-enlightened people, prone to idolatry, as the Israelites of that time were, regulations not thus fenced in with prohibitions and penalties would soon have become virtually a dead letter.

We will now proceed to consider separately the principal cases which have been felt as difficulties by many Bible students, and been used as weapons against the truth by unbelievers.

I. The punishment of Saul for sparing Agag and the Amalekites, 1 Sam. 15. At first sight it appears as if Saul's act in preserving the captive prince was one of humanity, and that Samuel's treatment of the prisoner contrasts unfavorably with that of the king. But if we look a little more closely we shall see that, in the first place, Saul's act was one of *military insubordination* as well as rebellion. A military chief, who should refuse to blow up a fort or storm a city, would be liable, even in our days, to forfeit his employment, if not his life.

Saul's disobedience, too, had not the excuse of being dictated by humanity, as the narrative plainly shows. Had it been so, he would have spared the women and children rather than the choicest of the

spoil. This would lead us to infer that Agag was preserved, not from any generous or merciful impulse, but with the hope of obtaining a large ransom for his liberation ; failing which he would probably have either met with a cruel death, or been reduced to the degrading slavery of Adoni-bezek's captive kings, of whom we read in Judges. When the Amalekite prince came “delicately,” or, as it should be rendered,* “luxuriously attired,” or “exultingly,” it was doubtless in the full expectation of being able to free himself by paying a large sum of money. And when he met, at the prophet's hands, with the death he had inflicted on so many (for Samuel's expression proves that he was known as a man exceptionally cruel even for his own time), we can only look on the transaction, as in the case of the cities of Canaan, as the execution of stern justice by one who acted in this, like Joshua, Moses, and Elijah, as God's executioner.

But there was probably no country in existence where the same fate, or a worse, would not have awaited any captive king who was unable to pay a ransom sufficient for the cupidity of his captors. We cannot look into a page of ancient history without seeing what was the general tenor of public

* See Genesius' Lexicon.

feeling many ages after the days of Samuel, and it is idle to apply the nineteenth century standard to such days. It was God's will to train his chosen people gradually to a higher standard than that of those around them, and Christ says expressly that many things were permitted to the Jews of those days "for the hardness of their hearts," which under the gospel would never be allowed. But the very persons who complain of the gospel standard being too lofty an ideal for our days, are ready to blame the half-civilized Israelites for not acting up to that standard, and this while they read with delight the classic poets in which deeds quite as bloody are recorded with approbation! Truly our own generation are not unlike the "children sitting in the market-place" (Matt. 11:16, 17) in our Lord's days.

II. The next case to consider is the slaughter of the Gibeonites. 2 Sam. 21:1-14. Why, it is asked, should this crime have been visited so much more heavily upon Israel than many other transactions which seem to us even more indefensible? And why was David sanctioned in inflicting a punishment, as satisfaction for that crime, which shocks our notions of justice, as well as humanity, by sacrificing seven innocent persons of Saul's family to appease the offended Gibeonites?

It is not possible to give more than a conjectural explanation of a transaction of which we know so little. We have no direct account of Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites, and can only infer it from two passages of the history—1 Sam. 22:7, 8, and 2 Sam. 4:2, 3. In the first of these, Saul alludes to "fields and vineyards" which he had given to his soldiers. Now, as he had not made any foreign conquests of land, and as the Israelites were forbidden to sell any of their own landed property, it was only (it would seem) by taking the lands of the Gibeonites, who dwelt in the midst of Israel, that he could have made these grants, and as the Gibeonites dwelt in the midst of his own tribe of Benjamin, this would seem all the more probable. In the second of these passages we find the inhabitants of the Gibeonite city of Beeroth flying from their city, and leaving their possessions to Saul's captains.

These of course are only inferences which may be drawn from examination of the passages in question, and it would be impossible, with the little light we possess, to speak with certainty on such a point. But one thing is clear: however and wherever the massacre took place, it was not only an act of cruelty, but a deliberate breach of a solemn covenant.

The Gibeonites had, it is true, saved themselves by an act of deceit (Josh. 9:1-15); but after this had been discovered, the Israelites did not feel themselves at liberty to draw back from the oath they had taken to spare the lives of this people. They ratified the engagement they had made, and bound themselves by a solemn covenant to respect their rights. These rights were henceforth as sacred as those of any tribe of Israel. And we see in all parts of the Old Testament that covenant-breaking was regarded as a sin of peculiar heinousness. God's promises to his ancient people rested specially on a covenant foundation (as in a wider sense they do now, to all who seek him through Christ, Heb. 6:13-19; 13:20, etc.), and therefore the sacredness of a *covenant* was the mainspring of their religious faith, and even of their existence as a nation, in a manner peculiar to themselves—besides the moral ground on which such agreements should be held sacred everywhere and at all times.

In this covenant-breaking the whole Israelitish nation had in some sort shared by allowing it and by partaking of the spoil; and their new king was implicated in it by not having at once made restitution. The punishment of the broken covenant was therefore to fall on the whole nation.

The atonement chosen is shocking to our feelings and notions ; but it was suited to times when the right of the avenger of blood to demand life for life was universally recognized. And it may be that this punishment of the substitution of the seven men for their whole house, terrible as it seems to us, was one of the lessons needed to teach the Jews the necessity of atonement, and to prepare them to receive the great truth that their promised Messiah was also to be a substitute, the one suffering for the many.

III. The punishment inflicted on account of David's numbering the people. 2 Sam. 24. This seems at first more difficult to explain than any of the other cases ; for if it be regarded merely as an act of pride and self-exaltation, this would scarcely account for the manner in which it was evidently viewed by so unscrupulous a soldier as Joab, who was not likely to have been shocked by a mere outburst of vanity on the part of his sovereign.

It was clear that Joab looked on David's plan as the transgression of some distinct command : and we find one passage which leads us to infer that such a command had been given : " David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under, because the Lord had said he would increase

Israel like to the stars of the heavens." 1 Chron. 27:23. This does not expressly state that a prohibition had been given on that ground, but we are certainly justified, putting the two records together, in concluding that the act had been prohibited in so many words, and that the sin was acknowledged by David and punished by God as a distinct act of disobedience.

IV. The punishment of Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:17-20) must come under the same head. It was essential to the whole character of the Mosaic law that the functions of the sacrificing priests should be accurately defined and limited. It was only in this manner that the minds of men could be prepared to understand the great truth set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Christ, being the true High Priest, of whom all the others were but types, no human sacrificing priest could ever be admitted to a share of His functions, when once He had completed his atoning work. And when we see how prone men have been, even in more enlightened times, to try and claim a share in these sacred functions, and "seek the priesthood" also (as Korah and his companions had done, and as Uzziah in this instance did), we can hardly wonder that a stern and uncompromising law should have been needed

in those early days to fence round a service of such high and solemn import.

In our days there is a tendency in many to think lightly of the two sins most peculiarly noticed with reprobation in the Old Testament—idolatry and disobedience to God: and it is well for us, who are yet enjoying the blessing of the “acceptable year” of the Lord’s long-suffering—the day of grace—to read the records of his sterner judgments on the sins we are inclined to think of little consequence, and to see how they are regarded in the sight of Him who, while “plenteous in mercy,” is yet of “purer eyes than to behold iniquity.”

V. The punishment of the “man of God” who had been sent to warn Jeroboam. 1 Kings 13.

This may appear at first sight even more disproportionately severe than the cases already noticed. The man of God had delivered the message faithfully, had firmly resisted the offers of rest and refreshment, which a long journey on foot in a warm climate must have made very tempting, and was at last deceived by a very plausible artifice, coming through a brother prophet. It would appear as if he had been more sinned against than sinning, and as if the punishment would have been more justly deserved by the man who had deceived him.

To this our reply must be, that the principle before laid down of the way in which God's delegates were dealt with will best explain the difficulties of history. As an individual, the young prophet was doubtless far less guilty in God's sight than his deceiver; but he suffered as a *representative man*, not in his own character, but as one to whom a public trust had been confided, and whose responsibility was therefore greater than another's would have been.

His commission was to reprove the king of Israel and his people for a great *public* crime against their Divine Ruler; that commission he was bound to fulfil to the letter, by action as well as word, and a failure in the execution of his trust, however incurred, had to be punished like high treason, because such failure would detract from the force of the message he had to deliver; just as, in cases of rebellion against any lawful government, it is often necessary to punish, for the sake of example, many who, having been entrapped and drawn into the course they had taken, may really be less morally guilty than others who have not come within the law's penalties.

In this case a great principle was at stake. Jeroboam, from motives of policy, had established the

worship of the golden calves as a substitute for the Temple services, to prevent his people going up to Jerusalem to worship, which he (not unreasonably) thought might detach them from their loyalty to him and lead them to follow the king of Judah. To make, as he thought, his kingdom more secure, he deliberately set himself and his people to violate the Second Commandment by instituting an unauthorized and therefore forbidden worship of God. A prophet was sent from Judah to give him a solemn rebuke and warning ; but the force of that rebuke would have been impaired, if not nullified, had the messenger of God consented to accept hospitality (and in those days such acceptance had more significance than in our own) from any of those who were even indirectly sharers in this great crime. The old prophet was probably quite aware, on his side, of the effect such an action would have in making the denunciation just uttered appear unreal and unmeaning. He was, most likely, a zealous worshipper of the golden calves, or at all events a partisan of the king, who may even have employed him to carry out the fraud. His artfully-planned scheme would have produced the very effect he desired, in neutralizing the terrible warning which had just been given to Israel, had not the disobedient

ence of the young man been so speedily followed by punishment, and that of a nature likely to strike terror throughout the land. It was needful that one who had been induced to allow even the story of an angel's message to win him from simple and unswerving obedience to the command given him should pay the penalty with his life.

And doubtless this awful judgment had its effect in leading many of the Israelites to return to the worship authorized by God. We read of a considerable emigration from the kingdom of Israel into Judah, first in the reign of Rehoboam, probably about the time of the events alluded to (2 Chron. 11:16), and afterwards in the reign of Asa (2 Chr. 15:9).

VI. The punishment inflicted by Elisha on the children who mocked him. 2 Kin. 2:23-25.*

This seems, like the former case, an exhibition of excessive severity; for if the word, as is generally believed, has really the force of "little children," it scarcely seems that an act of infantine mockery was worthy of any serious attention.

But some of the most trustworthy authorities in the study of the Scriptures have come to the conclusion that the word rendered "little children"

* See Note H, Appendix.

should be translated "young men" or "servants;" and, indeed, it is so used in numerous other passages. Ruth 2:15; 2 Sam. 18:5; 1 Kings 3:7; Neh. 4:23. In this case the difficulty at once vanishes, as their disobedience would then be that of conscious agents.

But if children be really intended, the sin punished was not the mockery of the children, but the idolatry, and bitter opposition to the prophet, of their *parents*, who appear to have been worshippers of Baal, persecutors of Elijah and Elisha, and whose children acted as the imitators of their parents, and probably at their instigation.

In this case it would be to punish these idolaters that their little ones were taken; and, as in the case of the Canaanites, it may have been really in mercy that the children of such wicked parents were cut off before they could be conscious and responsible partakers of those parents' crimes.

These instances, though not all that could be brought forward, may be considered the principal among the cases of disproportionately awarded punishments among the judges and kings of Israel: and the mode of meeting these objections which has been here suggested, may help the student to make clear to his own mind, not only these, but

other instances which may occur to him. If once we clearly understand that the subjects of these penalties were *representative* men, suffering not only in their individual but in their public capacity, all will be plain.

It was as the great lawgiver and mediator between Israel and God, that Moses incurred the heavy penalty of dying before the Promised Land had been entered. He had been goaded into irritation by the obstinate unbelief and murmuring of the Israelites, and in his haste and impatience both "spake unadvisedly with his lips," and smote the rock which he had been commanded to speak to without touching. The act of disobedience was committed in a moment of agitation, and he might well have pleaded excuses for it; but he was God's delegate, the representative man of that page of history, and the fault could not be allowed to pass unpunished.

And it is remarkable how faithfully all the failures and wrong-doings of that great muster-roll of God's messengers and vicegerents have been recorded, placing them all, even the most blameless and holy, in striking contrast with the spotless and perfectly righteous ONE in whom was no fault.

OBJECTIONS TO THE NEW TESTAMENT.

SECTION I.

THE NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES.*

OBJECTION 1. That miracles are contrary to all our experience of God's dealings with man, and that as it is only on the testimony of those who professed to be eye-witnesses (the New Testament writers) that we receive our accounts of them, our belief must rest on an insecure foundation, since it is more likely that the testimony of others should be false than that wonders should take place which are contrary to our experience of what happens in the world before our own eyes.

ANSWER. The fallacy of this argument is, that it is based on the assumption that whatever may be true in a limited sense, must also be true taken universally.

* The remarks which follow would equally apply to the Old Testament miracles, but they are placed here because the New Testament "signs and wonders" have been made the special battle-ground of those who would fain separate the facts of the gospel from its moral teaching.

Now this assumption is wholly without foundation. It is quite true that there is *much* testimony which cannot be relied on ; but it is quite another thing to say that in a case of this kind *no* testimony can be relied on. On the contrary, we are compelled to rely on testimony for a great many things we believe, in ordinary life, every day.

Then again the expression, “contrary to experience,” is a very ambiguous and vague one. Contrary to whose experience, or to what kind ? If we refuse to believe anything contrary to the individual experience of any one of us—in that case, one who has never seen the sea must disbelieve all he hears and reads of it ; then again, the Eastern king would be quite right, on this assumption, in declaring his disbelief that water could become solid ; and a man born blind would be quite justified in refusing to believe that any one could find out the shape, or size, or smoothness, or roughness of an object without touching it. All these things are, respectively, quite as much out of the range of the experience of the persons in question, as miracles are out of the range of ours.

But we are not therefore justified in refusing to believe them ; we must remember that the experience of the best-informed of human beings must

be limited, and that we are quite unable rightly to judge of what things may or may not be impossible, under circumstances out of the range of that experience.*

The ground on which we believe the whole Bible history, and the authenticity of the originals from which the Old and New Testaments were translated into our modern languages, is exactly the same ground on which the untravelled believe in the existence of foreign countries, and on which nineteen-twentieths of mankind believe in the Copernican system (those facts about the earth, sun, and stars which only a very advanced mathematician can test for himself)—namely, the uncontradicted testimony of a number of independent witnesses. And we could not have a better foundation for our belief; for those who are opposed to each other on a variety of points—whether in respect of science, history, travels, or other subjects—will always be ready and eager to sift each other's evidence, and test, in the severest manner, each other's statements. Any facts which can stand such a sifting must be firmly fixed indeed.

It is on such grounds as those that all our belief in any history must be founded, unless we have en-

* See Note I, Appendix.

joyed opportunities of research only granted to a very few. And yet no one is thought unduly credulous in giving full credence to the main facts in the histories, ancient and modern, of the best-known countries. And what holds good as to these, really holds good in a far higher degree as to Scripture narrative ; for no history, ancient or modern (as we remarked before), has ever been subjected to severer or more searching tests. The body of uncontradicted testimony, therefore (that is, of testimony which no one has been able, with the utmost efforts, to invalidate), is far greater in this case, than that which supports any of the histories and ancient records of other countries which no sane person ever thinks of doubting.*

OBJECTION 2. That it is inconceivable that God, the Creator of the world and the Framer of the laws of nature, should interfere with the course he has himself laid down, and interrupt those laws for any purpose whatever.

ANSWER. This is again an attempt to judge of matters utterly beyond our view. We cannot, in our present finite state of being, undertake even to pronounce what is an interruption in the laws of nature. It is only by long and close observation that we are

* See Note J, Appendix.

qualified in any way to pronounce what those laws are, and the most profoundly taught and diligent and patient students of natural philosophy and natural history will generally be the slowest to pronounce dogmatically on such points. We know that many phenomena which were once regarded as interruptions of the course of nature, such as earthquakes, eclipses, comets, etc., are now known to be only a part of that regular course, subject to the same laws as those other and more ordinary processes which we see every day. It is therefore not such an easy matter as some think to pronounce decidedly that any special case is an interruption to the laws of nature.*

But, secondly, we are not justified in assuming that the accustomed order of things would never be altered by Him who created it. It would be very hasty to assume that the maker or director of some complicated and powerful machine would never alter its working for any conceivable purpose. We know, on the contrary, that when a new kind of operation is required, the mechanic generally brings in some new power, or some modification of the old one, to bear on his work. The steam power is used in one way to start the working of a machine,

* See Note K, Appendix.

and in another to carry it on. Therefore, judging by what we see around us, we might expect beforehand that God would be pleased to use different and new manifestations of his power when what we call a new dispensation was brought in, from those he employs in the ordinary course of his providence.

It is plain, for instance, that the creation of the world, whenever it took place, must have been what we should now call a miracle ; that is, that the manifestation of God's power which called this present world and its productions first into being, must have been different from that by which the ordinary course of nature is now carried on. The first animals and plants must have been produced in a different manner from that in which their successors have been ; so with all the other processes of nature.

But since the creation, God has from time to time been pleased to deal with man in different ways, and to reveal his will to him under what we call different *dispensations* ; we might, then, reasonably expect these various dispensations to be ushered in by some “mighty works” which to our eyes appear variations in the ordinary course of nature, and which would arrest man's attention and show

him that God was about to communicate with him in an extraordinary manner.

Now this is precisely what we see in God's Word to have been his dealings with men. Every time that some special revelation of his will has been introduced, it has always been accompanied by "signs and wonders." These signs were worked in the days of the early patriarchs, when God had some message for them ; then with the Israelites in the desert, when the Levitical law was brought in, and during the whole time of their sojourning in the wilderness till they were established in the Promised Land. From time to time they were manifested to the judges and kings of Israel, always to point out some particular warning or instruction to be given by their Divine Head.

Then, again, when what we might call the prophetic dispensation was brought in, *i. e.*, the special course of teaching and exhortation, which the long line of prophets, from Nathan in David's time down to Malachi, were to communicate to the people of Israel and Judah, these prophetic teachings were accompanied from time to time by miracles.

And lastly, when the Gospel dispensation was introduced, miracles, which had been suspended for

many years, reappeared ; Christ opened his ministry with them, and carried it on to its close, working miracles wherever he went ; and when he left the work to be carried on by the apostles and other disciples, they also performed mighty works, and “confirmed the word with signs following.”

Thus it appears that miracles have always been the special accompaniment of every fresh message from God to man ; and so far from being interruptions to the course of his providence, they are as much in their natural place when he is about to deliver a message, as the movement of the needle in the electric telegraph is when a despatch has to be sent.

And we may observe that men have not been left in doubt as to whether the “mighty works” done on such occasions were to be regarded or not as signs that God was speaking to them. Care was always taken to make it perfectly clear that the wonders which took place were the credentials and tokens of a message from God. It was not merely because something occurred unlike the common course of nature that they were to look on it as a miracle or sign sent from God ; he always caused them to be distinctly told so, and they were therefore without excuse if they refused to listen to the

warning voice. The miracle was the herald of a message from heaven.*

OBJECTION 3. That, after all, the belief in miracles is not an essential part of the Christian religion, which rests mainly on the internal evidence afforded by the beauty and sublimity of its teaching and its fitness to the wants of mankind. Miracles, then, these objectors urge, even if they were a help to the belief of those who witnessed them, are more of a hindrance than a help to the faith of modern Christians.

ANSWER. This objection is founded on a mistake as to the true nature of evidence. It may be more difficult for us to prove that miracles really were wrought, than it was for those who witnessed them; but when once they are proved, they are as good an evidence for us as for the eye-witnesses. And we cannot set apart the miraculous part of the New Testament history (as we already observed), and leave it in abeyance, because the truth of the whole revelation given in the Gospels is staked upon the truth of the miraculous manifestations. We cannot escape from the fact that Jesus and his apostles professed to work miracles, and appealed to them to prove the truth of their teaching. Now if

* See Note L, Appendix.

their professions were false—if the miracles were not really wrought—they must have been deliberate impostors or the very maddest of all fanatics, and then what becomes of the power of their moral teaching? If we accept one part, as we have already pointed out, we must accept the whole.

And, in point of fact, it would be a greater strain on any one's powers of belief to imagine that a religion like the Christian, with everything against it, could have gained possession, as it has done, of the civilized world, without miraculous manifestations, than to believe in those very miracles. Its success, without superhuman power being employed, would have been, we may say, the greatest miracle of all, as it had no aid from without, and nothing in its teaching to make it acceptable, like the Mohammedan and heathen systems of religion, to the lower part of men's nature.*

* See Note M, Appendix.

SECTION II.

ON THE GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS.

OBJECTION I. That the gospels could not be what they profess to be—real connected histories of our Lord's life and ministry—because we find that the earliest Christian writers were not in the habit of quoting, as we do, from the Gospel of St. Mark or St. Luke, etc., but usually referred to certain words or acts of our Lord, as to something known by tradition to themselves and their readers, without alluding to any written record. Therefore, these objectors urge, the evidence for the truth of the gospel narratives must rest on mere traditional information.

And this objection is made to cut two ways: the opponents of revealed religion bring it forward to show that we cannot rely on the truth of the histories; and those who (like the members of the Church of Rome and others holding similar views) rely on tradition as of equal value with Scripture, bring the same argument forward to prove that the most important truths rest on no better foundations

than the church “traditions,” or oral reports, to which they hold so firmly.

ANSWER. The argument appears at first sight plausible, but it does not prove the point. Take an example to illustrate it. Suppose a memoir is drawn up of some great man, a philosopher, or a master in some art or science, recently deceased ; his pupils and friends, and *their* pupils, would at first be more inclined to refer to their own recollections, or to the accounts of him they had themselves heard from eye-witnesses, than to the written volume compiled from those very sources : standing near the fountain-head, they would not care to drink from the cistern. Yet how absurd it would be for men of a generation later to conclude that the memoir was of no value, because the great man’s contemporaries, or those instructed by them, preferred drawing from the source which supplied that memoir !

The very circumstance of the written history being drawn up, pointed out that the compilers did *not* think verbal tradition would be sufficiently reliable, eventually, to depend upon.

Now this is precisely what has taken place with the gospels. St. Luke tells us expressly that *many* had taken in hand (besides himself) “to set forth in

order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among them," and that these things had been delivered to them by those "who from the beginning were eye-witnesses." In other words, the apostles and immediate disciples of our Lord either wrote or related by word of mouth what they had seen and heard to many others who undertook to "set forth," or, as we should now say, to compile and arrange, these histories. The first three gospels were doubtless the result of these compilations. It was to guard, therefore, against the danger of verbal narratives gradually getting altered by passing from mouth to mouth that these gospels were "set forth" by those who were either themselves "eye-witnesses," like Matthew and John, or who received them directly from such, like Mark and Luke. That the early Christians should have been more inclined to quote the sayings of those "eye-witnesses" than the written account is, as we have seen, quite natural. But the fact, as we observed before, of the written accounts existing, shows that verbal tradition was not relied on, and it also shows how careful the earliest Christians were to secure a perfectly accurate history ; while the circumstance that the references they made from memory agree with the written histories, is an additional proof of their accuracy.

And the way in which the gospels are compiled offers further proof of their being records of a real history. It is the false stories, the forgeries, like the Book of Mormon, which come out full grown at once ; real histories are of slow and gradual growth. A jeweller may make a paste imitation diamond quickly ; the real gem is formed slowly and silently in the earth.

OBJECTION 2. The authenticity of the Gospel of St. John.

It is a favorite assertion of writers of the class we are alluding to, that St. John's Gospel is not to be viewed as in any way connected with, or agreeing with, the other three ; that it is to be regarded as the product of the writer's own mind, put forth to advocate his peculiar views ; and not, as it professes to be, a faithful transcript of the most important part of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The character given of him, it is also alleged, in this fourth gospel, is different from that of the other three : in those you have works of mercy and beautiful moral teaching ; in this, chiefly abstruse doctrines and disputes with the Pharisees and scribes.

ANSWER. The Gospel of St. John itself, carefully and candidly studied, supplies the best reply we

could make. To point out all the proofs of the unity of design of the four gospels, and of their remarkable agreement together, would fill many volumes; but even could we give them here in detail, it is better for the student to draw them out for himself; and the more he does this, the more entire will become his conviction that the testimony of each of the "four witnesses," as the gospel writers have been truly called, confirms and throws light on the other. We shall find that if certain actions or certain discourses are given more fully in one than in another, still they all harmonize in the main points with each other; and if there are any apparent discrepancies, they are only such as we may plainly see could be reconciled, had we more detailed and minute information.

We shall see how each gospel contains something of the element of each of the others, though one part may predominate more in one, and another in another. If Matthew contains more of the beautiful lessons of charity and goodness in the Sermon on the Mount, it has also the stern denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, agreeing with those in the fifth, seventh, and eighth chapters of St. John; and if St. John has fuller accounts of that long controversy with the self-righteous Jewish rulers, his

narrative has also an abundant share of the works of love—the tears by Lazarus' grave, the last tender thought for his mother in the midst of his own dying agonies. And if what we may call the leading doctrines of Christianity are more clearly set forth in St. John than in any of the other three, we shall find, on further study, that those leading doctrines can also be found in the others: for example, the numerous statements in John 1, 3, 5, 8, etc., that Christ is the Revealer of God to man, are matched by the memorable declaration in Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22, that “no man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.”

Again, the atonement for sin, so plainly set forth throughout the whole Gospel of St. John, is no less plainly, though more concisely, stated in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45. And the same may be said of many other passages.

Then again, as to the narrative, observe how wonderfully the details given in St. John fit and dovetail, as it were, into those of the three others. Observe how the first calling of Andrew, Simon, and Philip, related in John 1, throws light on the account of the second call of the two former with their friends by the Lake of Galilee. In Luke 5:1,

2, we see Jesus accosting Simon as one already known to him, and responded to in the same way. How is this explained? only by John's account of the first introduction, "where John was baptizing." John 1:28.

Again, the declaration of the false witnesses that Jesus had said he would "destroy the temple and build it up in three days," though they failed to make out a clear case, was still evidently founded, like most accusations, upon some misrepresentation of a real incident; otherwise it could hardly have taken such hold on the minds of his enemies that they even reproached him with it on the cross. But when we read St. John's account of our Lord's declaration, made on the occasion of his first purifying of the Temple, at the beginning of his ministry, that if they destroyed the temple, he would rebuild it in three days, John 2:19, 20, referring to the "temple of his body," we have the key to the wilful misrepresentation of this prophecy which was afterwards brought forward by his enemies.

Many other instances will occur as we continue to study; and the more we search, the more will our faith be confirmed by fresh manifestations of the beautiful completeness of the great whole formed by these four independent histories, and the more

we shall see that so perfect a structure was never the production of anything of man's invention.

OBJECTION 3. That the narratives of the evangelists are in many parts scanty and imperfect, and some of their details are so loose and unconnected that it is difficult entirely to harmonize them ; also that very scanty particulars are given of many things in which we should naturally take a lively interest ; as, for example, of all that concerns unfulfilled prophecy ; and still more, in everything connected with a future state, and the condition of the blest. On the intermediate state we have only three or four passages, and those very brief and concise ; the descriptions of heaven are, chiefly, manifestly symbolical in their character ; and of angels, etc., we have but very slight and rare mention made.

ANSWER. Whether this is like what we might expect of a revelation from God, is perhaps hardly needful to inquire ; the answer we should give to objectors is, "Are these things like what we should meet with in a revelation from MAN?"

Contrast the scanty notices complained of here with the full and minute details of the Hindoo and Mohammedan paradises. Contrast the slight and inartificial gospel narratives with the carefully-framed and neatly rounded-off and elaborately-fin-

ished histories of many impostors. In general, we shall find a false narrative much more accurately and carefully arranged than a true one. The deceiver is obliged to be doubly careful not to leave a loophole for criticism. Lawyers who have to examine witnesses before a court of justice know well that the statements made by the really honest ones are often less clear and coherent, and apparently, at first sight, less consistent, than those of the dishonest ones, who have made up their false story beforehand, and are on their guard against attacks, though on closer examination the flaw in these can be discovered.

And yet, with all their care, the compilers of fictitious narratives (whether made only to amuse, like Defoe's tale, or with deliberate intent to deceive, like the histories of several famous impostors) have never been able to imitate truth so successfully as to avoid all discrepancies and all inaccuracies. But the closer we look into the gospel narratives, the more we shall see that the apparent discrepancies are just such as would naturally creep into any accounts of a transaction related, independently of each other, by several different persons, especially by those who were giving simple, unvarnished histories of what they had themselves seen and heard,

and who were more eager to dwell upon the main facts than to take pains in reconciling inconsistencies in the detail or in answering objections.

And, as we already observed with regard to the four gospels, so we shall find as to the whole of the New Testament, the more we study the development of characters and incidents, the more we shall be struck with the real harmony between all the different parts, and the truthfulness and consistency in the history, which underlies all apparent difficulties on the surface, and appears clearer and brighter at every fresh inspection.

Take, for example, the remarkable way in which the history of St. Paul, as given in the Acts, corresponds with the details we gather from the epistles, each part throwing light on the other, as has been admirably pointed out by Paley in his "*Horæ Paulinæ*." The same with the points of agreement between the history of St. Peter in the gospels and Acts, and the allusions in his two epistles; and many other cases might be cited.

The most artificially-framed fictitious narrative could never bear so close an inspection. Fiction and truth, as has been well remarked, bear the same relation to each other that the most delicate works of art do to those of nature. The most exquisite

point-lace appears coarse and clumsy when viewed through a microscope ; but the framework of a leaf and the wing of a butterfly appear more delicate and perfect the more powerfully they are magnified and the more closely they are examined.*

With regard to the deficiency of details about unseen things, we may well reply to objectors, that this rigid abstinence from everything which can gratify our curiosity or excite our feelings is precisely what we should not expect from any human teacher. Perhaps a little reflection will show us that it is in character with what we already know of God's teaching. The response of our Lord to Peter, when asking the fate of another, was, "What is that to thee? follow thou me;" and when he asked the number of the elect, the reply was, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

* See Archbishop Whately's "Lessons on Evidences."

OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIANITY GENERALLY.

SECTION I.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE.

OBJECTION I. That the religion of Christ, which we see was clearly *intended* to be universal, has made such slow and uncertain progress through the world since the early days of its triumph over heathenism. Only a very small portion of the inhabited world has come, even nominally, under the influence of Christianity. This portion includes, it is true, the most civilized, powerful, intellectual, and advanced portion of mankind; but this very circumstance makes it stranger that their religion should have spread so slowly and so partially.

ANSWER. That very slow and partial spread of the gospel in our days, with every *earthly* advantage on the side of Christianity, should prove to us that the early triumphs of the faith were *not* won by human power. In the first days of gospel preaching, all the wealth, power, civilization, progress in

arts, etc., which are now enlisted on the side at least of *nominal* Christianity, were *against* it. And yet a few despised Jewish teachers succeeded in triumphing over all these, and even greater obstacles, and this when martyrdom was likely to be the recompense of the convert.

It is true that it is only within the last eighty or a hundred years, since Europe was first evangelized, that any steady and concentrated efforts have been made to spread the gospel among the heathen ; still, since a little before the opening of this century, these efforts have been considerable, and many active and zealous missionaries of all denominations have gone forth. But the utmost successes of all these taken together do not come within an appreciable distance of those which the gospel won within the first quarter of a century, when its preachers had everything against them, except that special and extraordinary power which was manifestly bestowed on them from above to enable them to carry on a work of such difficulty. The power of the Holy Spirit to animate and strengthen the preachers of the gospel, to make their teaching efficacious, and to move the hearts of their hearers, is, thank God, never withdrawn from the Church of Christ. We see its workings wherever Christians are labor-

ing for the gospel, and in proportion to their faith and reliance on the Lord ; but the miraculous gifts bestowed on the first preachers of the gospel are at present withheld. It is clear that when Christianity was first preached, such gifts were needed to gain the missionaries a hearing from those whose attention could hardly have been won by the purest and loftiest teaching till this stimulus had been applied.

Why it has not been the will of the Almighty so to order it, that Christianity should at once and permanently have been spread through the world, independently of the often uncertain and fitful efforts of Christians, we cannot presume to say : all we *can* confidently affirm is, that the power which wrought such wondrous victories for the gospel was clearly a superhuman one—from heaven, not of men.

OBJECTION 2. That the lives and conduct of the great majority of Christians are such as to reflect no credit on their religion. Were it truly from God, these objectors allege, it would surely produce a more powerful effect on the lives of all who profess to be guided by its precepts.

Probably of all the objections brought forward, in conversation or in writing, against Christianity,

none have had more force than this ; the more because, alas, the arrow is pointed with truth, though the conclusion drawn is false. And those Christians especially who *profess* to be "religious," and are careless or inconsistent in their daily life, will one day find, to their bitter shame, that they have done more to hinder the spread of their Redeemer's kingdom than all the persecuting edicts of heathen kings, and all the scoffs of professed infidels. They have brought on themselves the "woe" denounced by the Founder of their religion on those through whom "offences come." And we need, all of us, to take shame to ourselves for keeping this too little in mind.

But, as an answer to objectors, their very objection can be turned against themselves.

ANSWER. If you see a garden overgrown with weeds, and a few valuable flowers nearly choked by the noxious and troublesome plants, you do not conclude that the flowers themselves are good for nothing, but that they are not the natural growth of the soil, which, if left to itself, would have produced *nothing but* weeds. So, the inconsistent and faulty lives of Christians are a constant witness to the truth that Christianity was a plant of *foreign* growth ; that it did not *originate* with those over

whose lives it has had such partial and doubtful sway, but came “down from the Father of Lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”*

OBJECTION 3. That while many professing a very high degree of Christian faith are inconsistent in their lives and practice, we find much nobleness of sentiment, generosity, and philanthropy among those not only without settled or firm belief, but who have, some of them, altogether cast off all faith in a Divine revelation. Does not this show, the objectors ask, that it is not Christianity, as such, which produces an effect on the hearts and lives of men, but merely any earnest and noble moral teaching?

ANSWER. In so far as these fine qualities and noble sentiments spring, as they often do, from a naturally fine, honorable, and generous character—and there *are* such, often, where there is no evidence of divine grace working—it only goes to prove that He who created the human heart is the same as He who is the Founder of that Christian religion which appeals to all its best sentiments—in short, that the Author of Nature and the Author of Revelation are the same.

* See Archbishop Whately’s “Lessons on Christian Evidences.”

But in so far as moral influences from *without* have produced these good fruits (and we must allow them to be good as far as they go), we may reply to the objectors, that they *are* fruits brought from the Promised Land, even though brought by the hands of those who, like the spies of old, give an evil report of the land. The *reflex*, or indirect influence of Christianity, even where it is very imperfectly known, and even among those who refuse to acknowledge its power, is very much greater than many real Christians are willing to allow.

If this be disputed, ask the objectors how they can account for the fact that in all the ancient world, before the preaching of the gospel, charitable and philanthropic efforts were utterly unknown? How is it that we have no record of the existence of anything like a hospital, an orphan asylum, a refuge for the aged poor, or of any attempt to ransom slaves on a large scale? It will not do to reply that superior civilization will account for this. Europe, in the earlier part of the Middle Ages, was much less civilized in most points than Rome under the Empire; and yet, even in the worst part of the Dark Ages, there were *some* attempts at hospitals for the sick, and *some* ideas of protecting orphans and desolate fugitives; and though it was very long

before the system of “serfs of the soil” was abolished, still this was done entirely by the efforts of the Christian church, imperfect and corrupt as it had become. The work of ransoming slaves was looked upon as a good and commendable work, and many rich men left or gave sums to it, as they do now to public charities. This was never done in the days of Greece or Rome. A great man might set free a favorite slave, or ransom a captive for some special reason, but never from a motive of general philanthropy.

Again, how were gladiator fights, the exposure of weak or deformed children, and other horrible abuses of the heathen world, abolished, if not by the gradual working of the *reflex* influence of Christianity? It is good to keep these things in mind, because while we mourn over the imperfect effect gospel teaching has had in the world, and justly lament that it should not have done *more*, we may be led to forget what it *has* done.

It is true, sadly true, that if the gospel influence had *fully* prevailed, wars would have ceased; but is it not *some* proof of the power it does exert, in spite of all, that we see men and women going out to tend and care for sick and wounded soldiers, at great personal risk and inconvenience, and in many

cases not even of their own countrymen, but foreigners—sometimes even soldiers of armies hostile to their own country? Allow that perhaps many who have done this were not actuated by real Christian principle—it may be so in some instances—still they would never have done it *but* for Christianity. Of this we may be certain, for we know that the best and most generous of heathens would never have dreamed of such conduct. We read of heathen princes and generals who were lauded to the skies for acts of generosity which *we* should look on as simple matters of course—acts of humanity and justice to conquered enemies, the omission of which would be blamed in the most unscrupulous of modern generals. How often has an outcry been raised, in time of war, for some act of severity which in heathen times would not have been thought worth a moment's consideration!*

When we look back and see what the world was *before* Christianity was preached, and then turn to look at what still goes on in countries where it is unknown, we shall be forced to own that if it has wrought less powerfully than should have been the case among those who *do* profess to believe it, it has done very much for many who do *not*.

* See Note N, Appendix.

OBJECTION 4. But, it will be urged by these objectors, we are quite willing to allow for the powerful influence of gospel teaching as regards *practice*. We accept the beautiful moral precepts of the New Testament, we receive the pure and holy life of its Founder; but why not be content with this, instead of insisting on those perplexing abstract doctrines which only trouble men's minds? Why not hold fast to the moral teaching of Christianity, and leave dogma alone?

ANSWER. The reason why we cannot and will not separate the moral teaching of Christianity from what you call *dogma*, that is, Christian doctrine, is, we may reply, because the Founder of our religion did not and would not do so. *He laid down his life because he would not.* It was "because he made himself the Son of God" that the Jewish priesthood clamored for his death. Did he give his life for a truth that is divine and necessary for our salvation, or did he fling his life away by mistake?

We must look these things in the face, and deliberately make our choice. The Christian religion is not only based on doctrine, but that doctrine is so closely interwoven with *facts*, historical facts, that we must in all fairness, as we observed before, accept or reject the whole.

Ours is an historical religion. The great central *fact* on which Christianity is based is the resurrection of Christ from the dead ; because on that resurrection is based the great central *doctrine* of the gospel, that he died to save us from our sins, and bore our punishment in our stead. Without the resurrection, this would have been a simple matter of *assertion* ; for his death would have been outwardly, in its leading features, the same as if it had been only a martyrdom, as the deaths of many of his disciples were. Of course the attendant circumstances were such as to mark it as peculiar ; but they would not in themselves have sufficed without his rising from the grave. This was the outward sign to human eyes that his death was not a mere part of the common lot of humanity, but that he endured it voluntarily to save us, and was set free from its bonds as soon as its purpose was accomplished.

This is the reason why so much stress is laid on the resurrection. It was a visible and undoubted fact, and the apostles were chosen as eye-witnesses to it. They could bear witness, as having lived with him before his death, that he had, three days after his burial, visited them, not as an apparition or vision, but in bodily form, eating and drinking

with them, and causing them to handle his risen body and the marks of his death. The question as to the *aim* and *purpose* of his death was in itself a matter of doctrine, and they might conceivably have been honestly mistaken as to a doctrine ; but they could not, unless they were madmen, have imagined that their Lord had visited and eaten with them, unless he really had done so. Therefore his resurrection rests on their testimony, and, supposing them to be in possession of their senses, we must either, as we said before, accept this fact or believe them impostors.

But the fact of the resurrection, again, is the pledge and witness to the truth that Christ died to atone for our sins. To admit one and deny the other would be to recognize the king's seal and refuse to admit the message sent under that seal. Therefore we are in honesty compelled to receive both, or to reject both.

And if we reject the apostles as honest witnesses, what becomes of their moral teaching ? How can we receive those as true and holy men who passed their lives in asserting a falsehood ? Thus we are brought to such a pass that we must, in common fairness and consistency, if we take the precepts as our guide, consent to receive the de-

spised “dogmas” also ; for they have been so joined by the writers of the New Testament that they cannot be severed without violence to truth and common sense.

To speak of “charity without dogma” (that is, without faith in the great leading doctrines of Christianity), or rather, without faith in that living Saviour of whose work and power and salvation these dogmas teach us, is to ask for fruits without a tree on which to grow, for streams and fountains without clouds to supply them with moisture ; for *effect*, in short, without *cause*. Our Lord’s own words are that he who *abides* in him is the one who “bringeth forth much fruit.”

And if the objectors remind us of what we have already acknowledged, that fruits have been produced, to all appearance, by naturally noble qualities of heart and mind, and by the indirect influence of the Christian religion, we reply that we fully allow there may be water pumped into artificial tanks and channels, and fruits gathered and tied to artificial branches. But we maintain that the water was first taken from a reservoir supplied by the clouds, and the fruits from the tree on which they grew.

The Christian virtues, or virtues like Christian

ones, which we see in those not directly influenced by gospel teaching, are like these artificially-supplied waters and fruits. They are not to be ignored or undervalued ; for, in the very imperfectly Christianized state of the outwardly Christian world, we cannot afford to dispense even with derived fruit or reflected light. But we must never forget what their real origin is. They may do service, even in this imperfect form. But we must keep in mind that they *are* derived, and never try to persuade ourselves that the original source is useless, because we cannot always trace its effects, or because the link between effect and cause may not be always easy to discern.

OBJECTION 5. "But," it is replied by these objectors, "how inconsistent it seems with the character of a merciful Creator to let the salvation of men depend, not on their trying to serve him to the best of their power, but on their assent to *dogmas* which they may be unable to understand or to believe ! According to Christians, unbelief as to *doctrines* is visited more severely than grievous sins in practice ; while assent to the doctrines of Christianity is looked on as more important, in God's sight, than a good and noble life. And all this is taught by the same persons who acknowledge and teach that

God sent his Son to give an example of godly life, and that he desires his servants to be holy as he is holy."

ANSWER. It is important to discuss the bearings of this subject with great care and attention, because many Christians weaken their own cause by the unwise manner in which they state it, and the hasty and careless assertions they make. They often speak as if assent to certain doctrines were like a password to be repeated before gaining an entrance to a camp or fortress, or like the "Shibboleth" on whose right pronunciation the life or death of the Ephraimites depended.

But this is not a correct statement of the case. What God requires is, not the mere assent to a certain formula, but a certain state of mind and heart with reference to the Saviour. And this is required, not arbitrarily, but because the state of the case *necessarily implies* it. In every case, even in worldly affairs, where the question is one of deliverance from suffering or danger, it is clear that (unless the case be one in which a person can be saved, as it were, by force in spite of himself) *acceptance of the offered deliverance must be the condition of gaining the benefit of it*. A sick man who will not believe that he needs cure, and will not accept the offered

remedy—a drowning man who will not seize the plank or rope held out—a prisoner who refuses an offer of escape—must bear the penalty and suffer the consequences of their unbelief. We have only to bring this obvious truth to bear on the matter before us. The Christian religion, as we have it in the New Testament, teaches in the plainest language that men are sinners, and that Christ came on earth to save them from their sins. We have parable after parable in the gospel given us to illustrate this fact, and to show the freeness of the gospel offer—the spread feast, the king's invitations, the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, the father welcoming his restored son; Christ pointed out as the Door and the Way; the same things *acted* in the miracles of mercy and healing, the sick, blind, lame, deaf restored by the touch of Christ. If all these parables and miracles mean anything, they mean that Christ is the source of life and deliverance; but if men refuse to apply to that source, can they expect still to enjoy the benefits which they have rejected?

All this of course only points to those who have refused the salvation offered to them. Scripture says nothing about those who had *not* the offer made, and we have nothing to do with that part of

the subject, or with anything but what concerns ourselves.

It does not imply, either, that he who accepts the deliverance must necessarily comprehend fully its nature. The drowning man may be saved by a deliverer of whom he knows but little, except that he *is* his deliverer. A child finds safety in clinging to his father, though he may be too young even to know his name. A willingness to accept the proffered deliverance is the essential condition ; and this, as we have seen, must be the case, even in earthly matters.

The more fully the saved and redeemed soul enters into the truths about his Redeemer's person and work, the more of course, his inner life will flourish, because the source of that life is in Christ himself ; but his safety lies in acceptance of the gospel offer.

Now, the reason why we, as human beings, must dwell on assent to doctrine, is simply because we have no other means of testing—as far as man can test—whether a person has received Christ. Fully and certainly only God can tell ; but the outward profession is the expression which seals the acceptance of salvation in the eye of man ; and therefore it is said that “with the mouth confession

is made unto salvation," and "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:10; Acts 2:21. It is not that confession may not be made where there has been no real reception of the gospel; but where it is *not* made—where, apparently, the doctrines of the gospel are *not* assented to—we have reason to conclude that the salvation offered by Christ has been virtually refused, or, at least, has not been received.

With regard to those who have *not* had the offer made them, as we already observed, we know absolutely nothing; but we have every reason to believe that he who really desires to serve God according to his light will have more light granted him. "If any man *will* [*wishes to*] do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7:17. It is not that good works can be accepted instead of faith; the brightest gold cannot pass if it is not stamped with the sovereign's image; but we have instances on record, like that of Cornelius, of God's mercifully *revealing* the needful light to those who humbly and honestly strive to serve him; and we can well trust him, that he will never allow those "to be ashamed who wait on him."

But this is quite different from affirming what these objectors complain of us for refusing to ad-

mit—that one who *will* not come in at the door of the sheepfold will be allowed to climb up some other way. John 10:1. We have no encouragement to believe that any such presumptuous attempt to choose our own way of salvation will be admitted, in defiance of the plain declarations of Scripture.

SECTION II.

OBJECTIONS CONNECTED WITH THE DOCTRINE
OF THE ATONEMENT.

OBJECTION I. That the Jewish sacrifices were only an imitation of those of the heathen ; that if we can conceive them permitted by God, it was only in condescension to the weakness of human nature, and to the proneness of the Jews to follow the example of the nations about them, which they would have doubtless done in any case, even if not permitted, and which was therefore, in this case, to a certain extent sanctioned. This objection you will find brought forward sometimes even by intelligent Jews.

ANSWER. It would be more reasonable to take it the other way, and say that the heathen sacrifices were, in all probability, derived from those of the Jews, or rather the original worshippers of God. For we see by the history of Cain and Abel that the first men born into the world were commanded, or at least authorized, to offer sacrifice for sin. And as the heathen religions were fallings away or declensions from the true one, it seems most proba-

ble that, in their aberration from the truth, they still carried with them some vague traditions which led them to keep up the sin-offerings which had been made to the true God by their forefathers before idolatry existed.

OBJECTION 2. That the statements relative to the Atonement in the Acts and epistles are to be received entirely in relation to the *moral* effect of Christ's death on the hearts and feelings of those who believed it; that his appointed work was to set an example of perfect self-devotion and obedience to God, and thereby to produce an impression so powerful on men's minds as to draw them to God, who had given them so great an Example, Teacher, and Guide. These persons will still call Christ's death an atonement, because, they say, it took place in order to reconcile man to God, and make him *at-one* with his Creator (the original meaning of the word "atone"). And in support of their opinion they cite the numerous passages in which the object of Christ's death is spoken of as being "to reconcile us to God," "God reconciling the world to himself," Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20, and other texts of a like import.

ANSWER. Is this view to be accepted, and if not, how is it to be answered? It would not be fair or

right to reject it as altogether untrue. These statements do contain truth, but not the whole truth. It is quite true that it is God who is seeking to reconcile man to Himself, not man who has to try and reconcile God. It is man who is unwilling to draw nigh to God, not God who is unwilling to draw man to him. It is quite true also that the sufferings and dying love of our Lord and Saviour are such as to melt the hard heart of the sinner, and awaken feelings of love to God and hatred to sin in his soul.

But it is one thing to say that the apostles put forward these truths in the passages quoted and in others, and another to say that *only these truths* are taught by them. These teachers give us only *half* the truth ; and it is under the disguise and shelter of half-truths that all the greatest religious errors have been introduced.

The truth they have left out is this : that the death of Christ is not, as they would express it, "*subjective*" alone—that is, not only to be viewed as a means of producing an effect on our minds—but also, and principally, *objective* ; that it is a work done for other causes than the effect on our feelings ; a work done to atone for sin, strictly and literally, by Christ "*bearing the sin of the world*" (John 1:29, margin) ; that he came into the world

not only to touch our hearts, but to act as our Substitute and stand as our Surety.

Now to answer those who insist that the effect on our minds was the only object of Christ's work, there is one consideration we may bring forward, even before appealing to the text of Scripture.

We shall always find in common life, that if some action is performed for the sake of producing an impression on the minds of others, and for that purpose alone, *it will fail as soon as that purpose is found out*. Take an example. A great man who has been undervalued or unjustly disliked by his fellow-citizens, wins their heart by some act of liberality and generosity, such as helping them in some time of public distress, or the like. This devotion to their welfare would doubtless lead many who had been his enemies to become his friends. But suppose they should afterwards find out that he had merely done this generous action for the sake of working on their feelings of gratitude, would not all the grace of the act be lost? That which is done *in order* to move us, ceases to move us as soon as we discover the secret. Even an orator must carefully conceal any endeavor he makes to affect the feelings of his hearers; and he is always most powerful if he can make them think that his words

are the spontaneous expression of his heart at the moment.*

Now, if this holds good in earthly things, how much more in respect of matters which must be so far harder for men to enter into than anything concerning their “brother whom they *have seen*”?

If, then, the view of these teachers be the true one, it must follow that the benefit of the redemption to us all must depend on our being *kept in ignorance of its ultimate object and end*. And is this like what we are taught to expect from Him who is THE TRUTH?

Again, if we turn from “*a priori* evidence,” as it is called, to the testimony of the Scriptures, what do we find? In the gospels there is comparatively little mention of the subject, because the work was not yet complete. Yet here we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ came to “give his life a ransom for many,” Mark 10:45, to “take away” (or bear) “the sin of the world.” John 1:29. But in the Acts, epistles, and Revelation, we have the *blood* put forward continually and prominently. In Acts 20:28, and 1 Peter 1:18, as the means of “pur-

* See Mark Antony’s speech, in Shakespeare’s “Julius Cæsar,” in which he tries to impress on his hearers that he is no “scholar,” but a “plain, blunt man.”

chasing the church of God ;" in Romans 3:25, as a "means of propitiation ;" in Romans 5:9, of justification ; in Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14, of redemption and forgiveness of sin ; in Colossians 1:20, of "making peace ;" in Hebrews 9 and 10, of purging the conscience and enabling us to "enter into the holy place ;" in 1 John 1:7 and Revelation 1:6, of washing us from our sins. These are but a few out of the many that might be cited. If these passages do not refer to a real purchase and ransom by the death of a real Substitute, what do they mean ?

OBJECTION 3. That the similes of "blood," "ransom," etc., were addressed to Jewish and heathen converts in condescension to their early prejudices, and that the language of the altar and the sacrifices was merely adopted in order to please and conciliate them.

ANSWER. If this were the case, the apostles might justly be accused of being more desirous of pleasing their hearers than of conveying truth to their minds. If there was *no* truth in the language they used, no real vicarious sacrifice for sin, it would have behooved them to be doubly careful in the use of these expressions, as converts from Judaism and heathenism would be more likely than oth-

ers to misunderstand them unless they carefully explained and guarded their statements.

But it is not true that these similes were only addressed to those who had recently been Jews or heathen. The First Epistle of St. John, addressed manifestly to Christians of much longer standing, contains the same expressions and the same statements ; and so does the Apocalypse. No one will suppose that the members of the “seven churches” addressed by St. John had been all of them recent converts ; and yet he salutes them in the name of Him who “loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood.”

OBJECTION 4. All this is true, these objectors will reply ; but we have to remember that the writers of these passages were Orientals, and, like all such, were in the habit of using strong hyperbolical expressions and figurative language. These passages about the “purchase,” the “ransom,” and the “blood of Christ,” were only a figurative and poetical mode of saying that in some sort the death of Christ was needed to raise man to a higher state.

ANSWER. But, on the other hand, even allowing that they used figurative language, it must have been figurative of *something* ; otherwise it would have been unmeaning. And they do not make

these statements in the manner of those who are using tropes and figures; they affirm them as matters of fact. Neither do they write exclusively to men accustomed to Eastern imagery. The strongest of these statements of the atonement and its power are addressed to the Romans, an eminently practical people, and to the northern Celtic race who inhabited Galatia. When these men read about propitiation by Christ's blood, and of his being "made a curse for us," they were likely to understand it literally.

And the Hebrew converts were assured that Christ's sacrifice was the fulfilment and antitype of the Jewish propitiatory sacrifices. "The law was a shadow of good things to come." If these "good things" were only a certain effect produced on men's minds, what did all these types and figures mean?

OBJECTION 5. That it is, after all, impossible that the death or suffering of one person should really stand instead of the suffering of another; the image of a debt to be paid, so often used in explanation, is not a fair illustration. For, in the case of a debt, the *money* is what the creditors require, and whether it be paid by A or B is of no consequence to them. But, in the case of a punishment, no just

earthly judge would require a certain amount of pain to be undergone by way of expiating the crime, and be indifferent whether the pain was borne by the criminal or a substitute. And far less, then, should God, who delights not in pain or death in itself, be painted like one who desired punishment as the creditor desires his just payment!

ANSWER. The case of a debtor is not brought forward, as these persons seem to think, because the punishment of a crime is demanded like the money due to a creditor.

In ancient times there certainly *was* a feeling more approaching this. The ancients did not speak* of inflicting and suffering punishment, but of *taking* vengeance and *paying* a penalty. A modern judge, in civilized countries, thinks not so much of the past as the future, *i. e.*, of preventing future transgressions by deterring offenders.

The reason why the case of a debtor is applicable to the atonement, is not because a punishment and a debt are the same thing, but because the case of the debtor is the clearest and simplest, and also most familiar instance of *complete substitution* that we can use at the present day. The friend who pays for the debtor stands for the time completely

* See "Memoir of Archbishop Whately," p. 89.

in the debtor's place: he *represents* him. But this is not the only case of substitution that may be cited. Take, as an instance, what has often been done in the case of a rebel troop of soldiers: instead of punishing the whole corps, every tenth man is taken, and out of every hundred soldiers, ten suffer death. In this case the authorities, to produce a wholesome terror, and at the same time to avoid a general massacre, determine to make these ten men the *representatives* or *substitutes* of the other ninety; they stand in the place of their comrades, who are considered as having suffered the appointed punishment, and are then declared free. The same may be said in the case of hostages, representing a conquered nation or defeated army or captured city, and in the exchange of prisoners.

Again, take the case of one man serving in the army in the place of another. It is said that once a man who was drawn for military service in America paid a substitute to serve for him, who was killed in battle. The first man was again drawn shortly afterwards; he claimed to be exempted on the ground of having virtually *died* in the person of his substitute; and the plea was accepted. In the case of our Lord's death, he thus represented, or stood in the place of, the whole human race.

But in naming analogous cases of substitution, in order to make our meaning comprehended, we should be careful to give only such as will apply, and to remember that no illustration drawn from human affairs can ever *perfectly* and *fully* set forth a relationship so absolutely unique as that between a sinful creature and a just and merciful Creator.

It is very common to cite the case of the ancient king, who, when his own son had incurred the penalty which would have involved the loss of both eyes, volunteered to lose one of his own in the place of his son's. But this was not strictly applicable; for the king was *not*, in point of fact, his son's *substitute*, otherwise he would have lost *both* eyes. The king agreed to *share* the penalty, much as is done by the members of an insurance company against fire or losses by sea: they agree to bind themselves together to share the risk, and each to incur a small certain loss, to save one of the number from the danger of a greater. This, however, is not a case of *substitution*, but only of *coöperation*.

The cases we have named above, on the other hand, are those of real and complete *substitution*, *i. e.*, one person taking the place of another. And we shall see this principle running all through the Old Testament. The firstborn of men and animals

were to be *represented* by a lamb to be slain in their place. The tribe of Levi was to represent all the firstborn of other tribes, and in their place to be dedicated to the altar service. The scapegoat was to represent the whole Jewish people as their sin-bearer ; not in point of punishment—for we are not told, as some take for granted, that the animal's banishment to the wilderness implied death—but in the point of their sins being entirely put away and cast out of sight. All these images are intended, as the Epistle to the Hebrews indicates, to show forth the one grand central fact of all Christianity : that Christ, the God-man, was *to represent* the human race ; first suffering and dying for our sins, then rising for our justification, as a proof that death was overcome, and the penalty, to its fullest extent, undergone, then, ascending into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us, to *represent* us there.

But if the objectors reply by asking *why* this expiatory and substitutional death was necessary for the pardon of our sin, it is surely wisest to reply that this concerns “the secret things of the Lord our God.” We cannot know anything of ultimate causes. We are only to receive what we are expressly told, that the sinner deserves death ; that without shedding of blood is no remission ; that

the sacrifices of the Jews were appointed to keep up the sense of this truth in men's minds and prepare them to receive the great truth—that Christ is the one real and perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for the sin of the world.

On these truths—the vital and central truths of Christianity—we must take our stand ; and the more diligently and fairly and candidly we study the Scriptures, the more plainly shall we see that no honest interpretation of them can fail to set forth these truths.

It is remarkable that the more the idea of the Atonement as a purely subjective work—done for the sake of affecting the minds of men as spectators—prevails, the less hold the doctrine of salvation through Christ has on their minds in general. Doubtless many have preached this view without seeing what it led to, and may have individually and personally leaned fully on the work of Christ, in spite of the want of clearness in their teaching ; for often people are instinctively right when they are doctrinally wrong ; but the effects of erroneous doctrine must be looked for in the disciple rather than the teacher. As the Christian Church in general became corrupt, we shall see, on examination, that men got to view our Lord's death *practically*

(while assenting in theory to the orthodox creeds) more and more as a mere *example* and less and less as an *expiation*. It is this error that lies at the bottom of the prevalent idea in all the unreformed churches, that men must try to *expiate* their sins by voluntary sufferings—putting away sin, in fact, by the sacrifice of *themselves*, and not seeing that Christ has done it for them. They hoped by penance and self-denial to obtain pardon and to propitiate God. And they thought that the more closely they could imitate the Saviour, not only in holy life—for *that*, of course, is an example we cannot follow too sedulously and earnestly—but in his personal sufferings for us, the more likely they would be to obtain favor with God. They did not see that his sufferings for sin were *instead* of ours. The path he trod must be trod *alone*; and to try and get the benefit of it by imitating it, would be as foolish as for one who had been carried out of a burning house by a brave deliverer who received injuries from the flames in so doing, to think he would insure his own future safety by purposely inflicting burns on *himself*, to imitate his preserver.

From this false principle, also, spring the efforts made by preachers, painters, and sacred dramatists in the “miracle-plays,” to work up the minds of

spectators to strong and vehement *emotion* at the sufferings of Christ, as if a burst of feeling were what is required, instead of simple faith to lay hold on the benefit offered. Not that strong emotions may not *at times*, through God's directing and controlling power, have been made the means of leading men to grasp at the great reality in faith ; but the emotion is then only *the means*, not the end ; and, in the majority of cases, it is probably felt without the end being attained.

Doubtless, many of those who "smote their breasts," Luke 23:48, on witnessing Christ's death, afterwards lost the impression and remained in unbelief. It is very easy to weep at an affecting sermon on the Passion, and then go back to the old course of worldliness and ungodliness. And all the tears and passionate emotion in the world will never draw us a step nearer to saving faith, unless we see that the work of our Lord is not a mere example, or a spectacle to be admired, but a ransom to be accepted, or refused, by all men.

This can hardly be dwelt on with too much care. For the enemy of our souls is never weary of framing devices to turn off our minds from the contemplation of the great central truth of the gospel—acceptance and pardon through the atoning death

of the Son of God. He will allow us to accept almost any other doctrine of Scripture, if he can keep us from holding fast to the blood of Christ. He knows that only the “rope with the scarlet line” in it, is a safe one to hold on to, and he would gladly entice or deceive us into letting it go. It is our part to be ever on our guard, and “earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.”

These few heads of the principal points in the Scripture revelations which are disputed by popular writers and speakers, can, of course, be only slightly touched on here; but it is hoped they may be a help to some readers to carry on this study for themselves. They will not find that, carried on in this spirit, such a study will weaken their faith, as some seem to fear; very much otherwise. As we can judge better of the strength of some fortress which has resisted the most determined attacks from powerful armies of besiegers—as we are more vividly impressed with the firmness and solidity of a rock against which the waves of the sea are dashing with impatient fury—so we shall be more and more convinced of the impregnable nature of the “strong tower” of our faith (Prov. 18:10), as we see it successfully resisting the attacks of eighteen centuries.*

* See Note O, Appendix.

As gold appears brighter and clearer when it has been tried in the fire, so it is with the gospel.

It is vain for our adversaries to maintain, as they often do, that they are bringing forward new and untried resources against the faith they seek to overthrow ; the arguments brought against Christianity to-day will prove, on examination, to be little, if at all, different from those of centuries back. The old missiles are brought forward in a new form ; the arguments urged by the philosophers of the last century are reproduced with slight modifications. We have no cause to fear, while we hold fast to “the Law and to the Testimony.” But we must never take a single step in our own strength. We must prepare ourselves for battle in the name of the Lord, and relying on his promised help ; his armor must be our panoply ; the “sword of the Spirit, the word of God,” must be kept bright by prayer and watchful study, and held along with the “shield of faith.” And then we shall be enabled to say with truth, even before the face of our adversaries, “Their Rock is not as our Rock, themselves being the judges.”

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

THE BIBLE WRITTEN IN ORDINARY, NOT SCIENTIFIC, LANGUAGE.

SOME persons have imagined that we are bound to take our notions of astronomy, and of all other physical sciences, from the Bible. And accordingly, when astronomers discovered and proved that the earth turns round on its axis, some cried out against this as profane, because Scripture speaks of the sun's rising and setting. And this probably led some astronomers to reject the Bible, because they were taught that if they received it as a Divine revelation, they must disbelieve truths which they had demonstrated.

So, also, some have thought themselves bound to believe, if they receive Scripture at all, that the earth, and all the plants and animals that ever existed on it, must have been created within six days of exactly the same length as our present days; and this, even before the sun, by which we measure our days, was created. Hence, the discoveries made by geologists, which seem to prove that the earth and various races of animals must have existed a very long time before man existed, have been represented as completely inconsistent with any belief in Scripture. . . .

It is important to lay down the *principle* on which either the Bible, or any other writing or speech, ought to be studied and understood, namely, with a reference to the object proposed by the writer or speaker.

For example: suppose you bid any one proceed in a straight line from one place to another, and to take care to arrive before the sun goes down. He will rightly and fully understand you in reference to the practical object which alone you had in view. Now, you perhaps know very well that there cannot really be a straight line on the surface of the earth, which is a sphere; and that the sun does not really go down, only our portion of the earth is turned away from it. But whether the other person knows this or not, matters nothing at all with reference to your present object, which was not to teach him mathematics or astronomy, but to make him conform to your direction. . . . Now the object of the Scripture Revelation was to teach men, not astronomy or geology, or any other physical science, but religion. Its design was to inform men, not in what manner the world was made, but who made it; and to lead them to worship Him, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, instead of His creatures. *Archbishop Whately's Introductory Lessons on the History of Religious Worship.*

NOTE B.

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

Genesis 1:1. "The earth was without form and void" (*thohu va bohu*). It is not said that heaven was in this condition—but the earth was. Although the earth had been created by God, and though the God is a God of infinite goodness, wisdom, and power—yet still, through some agency or other, the earth was without form and void—or as "*thohu bohu*" signify, vastness and desolation. The word *thohu* is applied to a ruined city by the prophets of the Old Testament, Isa. 34:11, and is rendered by Gesenius "laid waste." The two words are used in Jeremiah 4:20-30; the only

other place where it is used is *Isaiah 34:11*; in both cases it means a ruin. Therefore we are led to conclude that this describes the condition of the earth reduced to a state of ruin by some convulsion or catastrophe which took place at some indefinite time *after* the creation mentioned in the foregoing verse. . . .

... It is distinctly asserted in Holy Scripture that God did not make the earth to be without form and void—God is not the author of confusion. *1 Cor. 14:33*; *1 John 3:8*. See *John 1:1*. Creation is of God—but chaos is not of God.

We are not to imagine that the earth in its present state is a mere isolated thing, but rather one of many links in a long chain of successive productions.

The history of all God's dealings with mankind presents to us a series of trials and victories—a series of ruins and reparations.

... Suppose, then, that the earth was created many myriads of years ago—suppose it to have been tenanted by many successions of animal tribes, and to have been adorned with trees and shrubs, . . . as the researches of geologists authorize us to do. Here Revelation comes to our aid. We know that the devil sinneth from the beginning. . . . Suppose, then, the earth to have been marred and ruined by the envious and malignant agency of evil spirits who had been cast down from heaven, what could be more probable than that God, who ever brings goodness out of evil, should have used the ancient materials of the ruined earth in order to build it up again in a more beautiful form, and to people the earth with new creatures—namely, men formed in his own image and likeness, who should succeed to the place in heaven whence the fallen angels had been cast down? *Abridged from Wordsworth's Commentary.*

NOTE C.

THE LONGEVITY OF THE ANTEDILUVIANS.

We have no direct information as to the immediate cause of the great longevity of the earliest generations of men. But it seems likely that it may have been produced by the influence of the Tree of Life. That the produce of this tree (whether its fruit or its leaves) was endued by the Creator with some property of warding off death we are plainly taught, both by its name, and by the exclusion of Adam from the Garden of Eden, "lest he should eat of the Tree of Life, and live for ever." It is likely that it had the medicinal virtue, when applied from time to time, of preventing or curing the decays of old age; just as our ordinary food preserves men from dying of exhaustion by famine, and as several well-known medicines prevent or cure certain diseases. We know, indeed, that there does not exist now any medicine that has the virtue of keeping up or renewing youthful health or vigor. But such a medicine would not be, in itself, at all more strange than many things which we are familiar with, but whose effects we cannot explain and could never have contemplated.

If, then, the Tree of Life were such a medicine as we have supposed, a person who always continued the use of it from time to time, would continue exempt from decay and death.

But supposing some persons who had been in the habit of using it (as our first parents probably had, since there was nothing to prevent them) should afterwards cease to use it, their constitutions would probably have been so far fortified, that though they would at length die, yet they would live much longer than man's natural term. And they would even

be likely to transmit to their descendants such a constitution as would confer on those also a great degree of longevity, which would only wear out gradually, in many successive generations.

Now it is remarkable that this exactly agrees with what we do find recorded. If you look into those parts of the Bible history which relate to this subject, you will find man's life in the earliest generation extending to eight or nine centuries and upwards. And you will find longevity gradually and slowly diminishing in each generation down to the times of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who lived rather less than two hundred years ; and again, down to the time of Moses, who began his mission apparently in the full vigor of life, at four-score, and lived to one hundred and twenty. Joshua, who succeeded him, lived one hundred and ten years ; and from thenceforward human life appears to have been brought down to about its present limit. *Archbishop Whately's Introductory Lessons on the History of Religious Worship.*

NOTE D.

THE ANIMALS IN THE ARK.

Genesis 7:11-16. "Every beast after his kind." As to the number of creatures in the ark, perhaps there were not so many as is often represented. All the human families, however diverse, came originally from *one pair*, and through four pairs (Noah and his family) : may it not be that the numerous species of animals might be traced up to much fewer *genera* than is sometimes imagined, and that it is not correct to infer from the multitude of species now existing that Moses intended to say that each species had a representative in the ark?

May not a special effect in multiplication of species have

arisen from the *benediction* of God pronounced after the Flood?

As is well said by Kiel, "Physiology is wholly unable to inform us concerning the number of pairs of animals from which the existing species of animals derive their origin; and it is ridiculous to speak of the two thousand kinds of mammalia and sixty-five hundred kinds of birds, which Noah must have brought into the ark and supplied with daily food." *Bishop Wordsworth's Commentary.*

NOTE E.

UNIVERSALITY OF THE FLOOD.

I cannot see any urgent necessity from the Scriptures to assert that the Flood did spread itself all over the surface of the earth. That all mankind (those in the ark excepted) were destroyed by it is most certain according to the Scriptures, where the occasion of the Flood is thus expressed: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth." It could not be, then, any particular deluge of so small a country as Palestine which is here expressed, as some have ridiculously imagined; for we find a universal corruption in the earth mentioned as the cause, a universal threatening upon all men for this cause, and afterwards a universal destruction expressed as to the effect of this flood.

"And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, and every man. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven, and they were destroyed from the earth, and Noah only remained alive, and

they that were with him in the ark." So, then, it is evident that the Flood was universal as to mankind; but thence follows no necessity at all of asserting the universality of it as to the globe of the earth, unless it be sufficiently proved that the whole earth was peopled before the Flood, which I despair of ever seeing proved. And what reason can there be to extend the Flood beyond the occasion of it, which was the corruption of mankind? And it seems very strange that in so short an interval, in comparison, as that was from Adam to the Flood, according to the ordinary computation—viz., 1,656 years, and not much above 2,000, according to the largest—the world should then be fully peopled, when in so much longer a space of time, since the Flood to this day, the earth is capable of receiving far more inhabitants than it now hath. *Stillingfleet's Origines Sacræ.* (See also *Poole's Synopsis.*)

NOTE F.

CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

There is reason to believe that the confusion which is recorded as having occurred at Babel (afterwards called Babylon), and which caused the dispersion of mankind into various countries, was in reality a dispute among them as to their worship of some god or gods. This, at least, is certain, that the scheme mentioned in Genesis 11 was something displeasing to God, and therefore could not have been merely the building of a tower. And it is plain, also, from the Bible history, that some ages after the Flood mankind had very generally fallen into gross idolatry, though we are not told expressly when and how it was introduced.

As for our tower of Babel, it is said, indeed, in our version, that a number of persons joined together to build a tower whose top should reach to heaven (our translators

meant an exceeding high tower), in order that they might not be scattered over the whole earth, and that God sent on them a confusion of language, which caused them to cease building the tower, and scattered them.

But you are to observe the word “reach” is supplied by our translators, there being nothing answering to it in the original, which merely says, “whose top to the heavens.”

And the meaning doubtless is, that the top of the tower should be dedicated to the heavens—that is, that a temple should be built on it to Bel, Belus, Zeus, or Jupiter, under which title the Greeks worshipped the heavens. For we find the Greek historian Herodotus, who many ages after visited Babylon, expressly declaring that there was there, in his time, a very high tower, on the top of which was a temple to Belus, who, he says, was the same with Zeus of the Greeks.

The ancient pagans, you should observe, were accustomed to erect altars to the heavens, or to the sun, in “high places” (Numb. 33: 52), on the loftiest mountains. And as the land of Shinar is a very fertile plain of vast extent, and quite level, it seems to have been designed to make a sort of artificial mountain on it—that is, a very high tower—and to build a temple on the top of this, to their god Belus, and so to establish a great empire consisting of people worshiping at this temple.

The confusion which God sent among them, and which caused the tower to be less lofty than originally designed, and dispersed many of the people into other lands, was most likely not a confusion of language, but a dissension about religious worship. The word in the original signifies *lip*. And it is more likely that it was meant to signify *worship* than *language*. A dissension as to that which was the very object of the building would much more effectually defeat the scheme than a confusion of languages. For, laborers en-

gaged in any work, and speaking different languages, would in a few days learn, by the help of signs, to understand one another sufficiently to enable them to go on with their work. But if they disagreed as to the very object proposed, this would effectually break up the community. *Archbishop Whately's Introductory Lessons on the History of Religious Worship.*

NOTE G.

THE MIRACLE OF JOSHUA.

What was it that Joshua desired when he commanded the sun and moon to stand still? It has been commonly assumed that he wanted a continuance of light. But to this there are several very serious objections. 1st. If so, why did he couple the moon with the sun? In daytime the light of the moon is inappreciable, and for Joshua's purpose, therefore, quite useless. Yet both in his command, and in the notice of its fulfilment, sun and moon are put upon an equal footing, as if the standing of both were essential to his purpose. On one supposition only is this explicable, namely, that what Joshua desired was, not light, but *darkness*, in which case both sunlight and moonlight would have been alike prejudicial. 2d. The other particulars of the battle accord better with this idea of darkness than with the prevalent one of light. It is said that during the battle there was a terrific hailstorm, so severe that more Canaanites were struck dead by the hailstones than fell by the sword. Such a storm presupposes a heaven covered with the thickest and blackest of clouds, such as would effectually obscure the light both of sun and moon. Now this hailstorm *preceded* the command of Joshua, and would seem to have been the occasion of it, from the way in which the two are linked together. It was thus after

a period of intense darkness, bringing rout and slaughter upon the enemy, that Joshua spake. And, under such circumstances, which was he most likely to desire, light or prolonged darkness? 3d. The duration assigned to the miracle fits in better with this idea than with the common one. It is said to have lasted "about a whole day." Now the battle began either at dawn, or probably rather before, for it is said that Joshua came upon them suddenly, having gone up from Gilgal "all night." First came the slaughter of the unexpected attack, then the storm, then the command to the sun and moon, which issued in their standing still "about a whole day," *i. e.*, all the day except that short space before the storm began. 4th. The expressions used concerning the sun and moon harmonize as well, and some of them much better, with this view than with the common one. There are three words used in the original: first (the word translated), "stand still," literally, "to be silent," an expression better suited to denote darkness than light. Second, "stayed," or "continued." It is to be observed that this is the word used in Habakkuk 3:2, to describe the sun and moon being obscured during a tremendous thunder-storm. Third (the word translated), "hasted not to go down" is, properly, "hasted not to go," the word "go" being one with a very wide range of application, and which would as naturally mean "come" or "go on" as "go down." On every ground, therefore, it would appear that the miracle was not, as usually supposed, a miracle of prolonged light, but of prolonged darkness. *George Warington's Can we Believe Miracles?*

NOTE H.

ELISHA AND HIS MOCKERS.

It was not the opprobrium thrown on the prophet Elisha and his being stoned that was the cause of the destruction of these children; but for another hidden cause they were destroyed. For these were sons of those iniquitous priests who ministered to the calf in Bethel, descendants of the prophets of Baal, whom Elijah slew in the days of Ahab. These were enemies both of Elijah and Elisha; also of all those who feared the Lord God of Israel, and of those especially who were sons of the prophets of the Lord who were in Beth-el. These were iniquitous persons and haters of God, whose sons heard them when they said that Elijah the prophet had gone up to heaven; and they mocked at this continually as false and devoid of truth, and they sung of him derisively from the time they heard it until now, to wit, before their wives and children. Wherefore these children, sons of evil ones, and haters of God, when they saw Elisha, the disciple of Elijah, their enemy and the enemy of their fathers, mocked him, shouting as they heard from their fathers. They also stoned him with stones, and said, "Go up, thou baldhead, falsely indeed as thy master Elijah has gone up." Wherefore Elisha cursed on account of their race these children, evil and sons of evil ones, in the name of the Lord the God whom and his prophet they derided. Wherefore also God quickly heard of it and smote them in anger, and sent upon them these bears and destroyed them.* *Jacob of Edessa.*

* The conjecture that the word translated "children" should be rendered "servants," or "young men," affords, however, another and perhaps a more satisfactory solution. *Note by the Author.*

NOTE I.

MIRACLES NOT INCREDIBLE.

When any one hears of a scientific marvel, does he merely compare it with the experience he has at hand, estimate the *prima facie* probabilities in favor of each, and on their balance base his final opinion? Most surely not. This is at best the first stage of the process. He inquires further,.... under what circumstances is it said to have occurred? By what agency is it said to be brought about? And his object in making these inquiries is to ascertain whether that experience of his, which is contrary to the phenomenon, has really any right to be heard in the matter at all. For if there be in this phenomenon any important circumstance, or any agency of the influence of which he knows nothing, then he simply has no experience whatever on the point to which to appeal. But his "contrary experience" being thus found to be irrelevant, the whole of the previous balance of probabilities is at an end. Take an example or two by way of illustration. For instance, the case of the Eastern prince and his ignorance of frost. When told that water was sometimes hard and solid, he would naturally ask, How was it so? and when? He would be answered, When the weather was extremely cold, so cold that people were obliged to wrap themselves up and have large fires in their houses in order to keep even moderately warm. Now of the existence of such cold he might very likely doubt; but one thing would be plain—having no acquaintance with such weather, he did not in the least know what effect it would have upon water. In a word, he had really no experience to appeal to. He might object to the cause alleged, he might doubt its efficacy, but his objection to the phenomenon as contrary to *past experience* was

no longer tenable. *George Warington, On the Credibility of Miracles.*

NOTE J.

EVIDENCE FOR ANCIENT BOOKS.

An unlearned Christian may have good grounds for being a believer, without possessing entire confidence in any man. He may have reason to believe that there are ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, though he never saw one, nor could read them if he did. And he may be convinced that an English Bible gives the meaning of the original, though he may not trust completely any one's word. In fact, he may have the same sort of evidence in this case which every one trusts to in many other cases—where none but a madman would have any doubt at all.

For instance, there is no one tolerably educated who does not know that there is such a country as France, though he may never have been there himself. Who is there that doubts whether there are such cities as London and Paris and Rome, though he may never have visited them? Most people are fully convinced that the world is round, though there are but few who have sailed round it. There are many persons living in the inland part of these islands who never saw the sea; and yet none of them, even the most ignorant clowns, have any doubt that there is such a thing as the sea. We believe all these and many other such things, because we have been told them.

Now suppose any one should say, "How do you know that travellers have not imposed upon you in all these matters, as it is well known travellers are apt to do? Is there any traveller you can so fully trust in as to be quite sure he would not deceive you?" What would you answer? I sup-

pose you would say, *one* traveller might deceive us; or even two or three might combine to propagate a false story, in some cases where hardly any one would have the opportunity to detect them: but in these matters there are hundreds and thousands who would be sure to contradict the accounts if they were not true; and travellers are often glad of an opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes. . . .

It is in the same manner that we believe, on the word of astronomers, that the earth turns round every twenty-four hours, though we are insensible of the motion; and that the sun is immensely larger than the earth we inhabit, though there is not one person in ten thousand that has ever gone through the mathematical proof of this. And yet we have very good reason for believing it—not from any strong confidence in the honesty of any particular astronomer, but because the same things are attested by many different astronomers, who are so far from combining together in a false account, that many of them rejoice in any opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes.

Now an unlearned man has just the same sort of reason for believing that there are ancient copies, in Hebrew and Greek, of the Christian sacred books, and of the works of other ancient authors, who mention some things connected with the origin of Christianity. There is no need for him to place full confidence in any particular man's honesty; for if any book were forged by some learned man in these days, and put forth as a translation from an ancient book, there are many other learned men, of this and of various other countries, and of different religions, who would be sure to detect every forgery, especially on an important subject.

And it is the same with translators. Many of these are at variance with each other as to the precise sense of some particular passage; and many of them are very much op-

posed to each other as to the doctrines which they believe to be taught in Scripture. But all the different versions of the Bible agree as to the main outline of the history, and of the discourses recorded; and therefore an unlearned Christian may be as sure of the general sense of the original as if he understood the language of it, and could examine it for himself; because he is sure that unbelievers, who are opposed to all Christians, or different sects of Christians who are opposed to each other, would not fail to point out any errors in the translations made by their opponents. Scholars have an opportunity to examine and inquire into the meaning of the original works; and therefore the very bitterness with which they dispute against each other proves that where they all agree they must be right.

All these ancient books, in short, and all the translations of them, are in the condition of witnesses placed in a witness-box in a court of justice, examined and cross-examined by friends and enemies, and brought face to face with each other, so as to make it certain that any falsehood or mistake will be brought to light. *Archbishop Whately's Easy Lessons on the Evidences of Christianity.*

NOTE K.

SUPERHUMAN NOT SUPERNATURAL.

Superhuman would perhaps be a better word to apply to a miracle than *supernatural*; for if we believe that "nature" is merely another word to signify that state of things and course of events which God has appointed, nothing that occurs can be strictly called "supernatural." Jesus himself describes his works, not as a violation of the laws of nature, but as "works which none other man did." But what is in general meant by "supernatural" is something out of the

ordinary course of nature, something at variance with those laws of nature which we have been accustomed to. *Archbishop Whately's Easy Lessons on the Evidences of Christianity.*

NOTE L.

WONDERS AND SIGNS.

You should observe, too, that it would not have satisfied men's minds merely to see some extraordinary occurrence, unless it were also something plainly done by the apostles as a sign testifying that they were divine messengers. Anything wonderful, in short, is then (and then only) a miraculous sign, when some one performs or foretells it in a manner surpassing human power, so as to make it *attest* the truth of what he says. And this may fairly be required from any one professing to be a messenger from heaven. When a man comes to this country as an ambassador from any other country, he is required first to produce his "credentials," as they are called, that is, papers which prove that he is no impostor, but is really commissioned as an ambassador. And it is equally right that men professing to bring a message immediately from God, should be required to show their "credentials," that is, such miraculous powers as God alone could have bestowed, as a sign or token to prove the reality of their divine commission. *Archbishop Whately's Easy Lessons on the Evidences of Christianity.*

NOTE M.

MIRACULOUS TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH.

It is quite a mistake to suppose that the difficulty of proving any fact makes that fact, when it *is* proved, a less convincing proof of something else. For example, those

who live in the neighborhood of the places where beds of sea-shells are found near the tops of hills, and have seen them there themselves, are convinced by this that at some time or other those beds must have been under the sea. Now a person who lives at a distance from such places has more difficulty than those on the spot in making out whether there *are* any such beds of shells. He has to inquire of travellers, or of those who have conversed with them, and to consult books, and perhaps examine pieces of the rock containing some of the shells; but when once he is fully satisfied that there are such beds of sea-shells, this is just as good a proof to him as to the others that the sea must have formerly covered them.

And so also in respect of the Christian miracles. The difficulty we may have in deciding whether they were really wrought does not make them (when we *are* convinced that they were wrought) a less decisive proof that the Christian religion is from God.

But as for the difficulty of believing in anything so strange and wonderful as those miracles, you should remember that every difficulty (as was observed before) should be weighed against that on the opposite side. Now the difficulty of believing the miracles recorded in our sacred books is much less than the opposite difficulty of believing that the Christian religion was established without miracles. That a Jewish peasant should have overthrown the religion of the civilized world without the aid of any miracles, is far more miraculous—at least more incredible—than any that our books relate; and it will appear still more incredible if you remember that this wonderful change was brought about *by means of an appeal to miracles*.

Jesus and his apostles did certainly *profess* to display miraculous powers in proof of their being sent from God; and

this would have been the greatest hindrance to their propagating a new religion if they had really possessed no such powers, because this pretence would have laid them open to detection and ridicule.

But there is a distinction between our religion and all others which is often overlooked. Almost all religions have some miraculous pretensions connected with them; that is, miracles are recorded to have been wrought in support of some pagan religion among people who *already* believed it.

But you will not find that any religion except ours was ever *introduced*—and introduced among enemies—by miraculous pretensions. Ours is the only faith that ever was *FOUNDED* on an appeal to the evidence of miracles. And we have every reason to believe that no such attempt ever did or could succeed if the miracles were not really performed. The difficulty, therefore, of believing that the Christian religion was propagated by means of miracles is nothing in comparison to the difficulty of believing that it could have been propagated without any.

Indeed, we have every reason to believe that many *more* miracles must have been performed than are particularly related. Several particular cases, indeed, of our Lord's miracles were described; but besides these, we are told in various places of great multitudes of sick people being brought to him, and that "he healed them all." Matt. 12:15; 19:2. So, also, besides particular miracles related as done by the apostles (Acts 2:33; 3:7; 9:33; 13:11; 14:8; 28:5), we are told, generally, of their not only performing many miracles, but also bestowing miraculous powers on great numbers of disciples (Acts 8:6; 19:6); and we find St. Paul, in one of his epistles, speaking of it as a thing familiarly known, that miracles were "the signs of an apostle." 2 Cor. 12:12. And in all these books we find miracles not boastfully dwelt

on, or described as something unusual, but *alluded* to as familiarly known to the persons to whom the books were familiarly addressed, that is, to the Christians of those days.

But besides the accounts given in the Christian Scriptures, we might be sure, from the very nature of the case, that the apostles could never even have *gained a hearing*, at least among the Gentiles, if they had not displayed some extraordinary and supernatural power. Fancy a few poor Jewish fishermen, tentmakers, and peasants, going into one of the great Roman or Grecian cities, whose inhabitants were proud of the splendid temples and beautiful images of their gods, which had been worshipped time out of mind by their ancestors; they were proud, too, of their schools of philosophy, where those reputed the wisest among them discoursed on the most curious and sublime subjects to the youths of the noblest families; and then fancy these Jewish strangers telling them to cast away their images as an abominable folly—to renounce the religion of their ancestors, to reject with scorn the instructions of their philosophers, and to receive instead, as a messenger from heaven, a Jew of humble station who had been put to the most shameful death. How do you think men would have been received who should have made such an attempt as this with merely such weak human means as preaching? You cannot doubt that all men would have scorned them and ridiculed or pitied them as madmen. As for the wisdom and purity and sublimity of the religion of the gospel, these might have gained them some attention—not indeed among the mass of the people, who were too gross to relish or perceive this purity and wisdom—but among a very few of the better sort, if once they could be brought to listen to the description of the religion. And this perhaps they might have done, if it had been taught by some Greek or Roman philosophers famous for knowledge and wisdom.

But the gospel was preached by men of a nation which the Greeks and Romans looked down upon as barbarian, and whose religion especially they scorned and detested for being so different from their own. And not only did the apostles belong to this despised nation, but they were outcasts of that very nation, being rejected and abhorred by the chief part of their Jewish brethren.

If, therefore, they had come among the Gentiles teaching the most sublime religious doctrine, and trusting merely to the excellence of what they taught, it is impossible they should have had a hearing. It is not enough to say that no one would have *believed* them, but no one would even have *listened* to them, if they had not first arrested men's serious attention by working (as we are told they did) "remarkable [special] miracles." *Acts 19:11. Archbishop Whately's Easy Lessons on the Evidences of Christianity.*

NOTE N.

EXCEPTIONAL CASES OF HEATHEN GENTLENESS.

In reference to this part of the subject, it is only fair to allude to the records come down to us of the Peruvian Incas as an *apparent* exception. They were certainly far superior in gentleness and generosity even to enemies than any nation of whom we have any account; and far beyond their so-called Christian conquerors. But theirs must be looked on as an exceptional case: a people of originally gentle and genial nature, and whose worship, however received or derived, had retained, apparently, some traces of the original pure belief from which all nations had more or less departed, after the early times of the patriarchs, with the exception of God's chosen people, the Hebrews.

NOTE O.

DIFFICULTIES OF INFIDELITY.

It is worth while to remember that all the difficulties of Christianity which have been brought forward as objections against it are so far evidences in its favor, that the religion was introduced and established in spite of them all. Most of the objections which are brought forward in these days had equal force—and some of them much greater force—at the time when the religion was first preached. And there were many others besides which do not exist now, especially what is called “the reproach of the cross,” the scorn felt towards a religion whose Founder suffered a kind of death reckoned in those days the most disgraceful, and whose followers were almost all of them men of obscure station, and of low birth, poor, unlearned, and without worldly power.

Yet, in spite of all this, the religion prevailed. And that it should have made its way as it did, against so many obstacles and difficulties and objections, is one of the strongest proofs that it must have had some supernatural means of overcoming them, and that therefore it must have come from God. *Archbishop Whately's Easy Lessons on the Evidences of Christianity.*

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01012 2986